

SOSA STICA



MARIÆ IMMACULATÆ

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REGINA SACRATISSIMI ROSARII ORA PRO NOBIS. Excudi curabat ad laud. et glor. Dei O.M. eiusa Matris. et Confratio Societ. Sacratiss. Rosarij in Monasterio S. Kuberti erectæ dedicabat, R. Abbas et Couent' Hubertin' A'1633

IMMACULATÆ

TEIL, JUBILÆUM A.D. M.CM.IV.







THE FIFTEN MYSTERIES OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY AND OTHER JOYS, SORROWS AND GLORIES OF MARY

ILLUSTRATED WITH COPIES OF THE ROSARY FRESCOES OF GIOVANNI DI SAN GIOVANNI AND OTHER ARTISTS

KENELM DIGBY BEST

OF THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI



LONDON:

R. & T. WASHBOURNE, 4 PATERNOSTER ROW LASLETT & CO., 254 BROMPTON ROAD

> ST. LOUIS, MO .: B. HERDER, 17 SOUTH BROADWAY

NIBIL OBSTALL H. S. BOWDEN.

IMPRIMATUR FRANCISCUS ARCHIEP, WESTMONAST.

Die 11 Feb., 1904.

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PREFACE

IFTY years ago, Pope Pius IX., of holy memory, gloriously exercised his personal Infallibility, and imposed on the universal Church the obligation in future of holding as a doctrine

of Faith the long-cherished belief that God has given to Mary the grace and glory of the Immaculate Conception. The subsequent Vatican Council affirmed that the right to such Infallibility was inherent in the Office of Supreme Pontiff; but without waiting for such a Decree on the part of a General Council, Pius IX. defined the Doctrine; and the children of the Church loved him all the more for the consolation he gave them by his sublime act.

This Year of Our Lord 1904 is, therefore, the Jubilee Year of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception. Leo XIII. had already given his instructions, and made known his will that the Jubilee should be celebrated with all solemnity. He was "prevented by death from remaining" to approve of and bless the execution of his pious project; but another Pius has been given by God to the Flock of Christ, and while "prayer is made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him" he will have the sweet joy and consolation of presiding over these Jubilee Celebrations.

To a chosen number of revered Cardinals, Leo XIII. committed the direction of the Jubilee rejoicings

and the various ways in which Our Lady is to be honoured. These Princes of the Church suggested, amongst other means of commemorating this Year of Jubilee, that a Library or Collection should be formed, to consist of writings old and new about Our Blessed Lady. Accordingly, one who in reciting Divine Office for nearly fifty years has said "Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata," may be permitted to reveal and record the thoughts about Our Lady which during that time have had a place in his heart and on his lips. Therefore I have ventured to compose this work, and gratefully avail myself of the permission of my Superiors to offer it in homage to the Queen Conceived Without Original Sin, the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary.

Attention will not be refused to the frontispiece, for which I have to thank a kind brother in St. Philip. Its design suggested the title chosen for the book—a title, be it said, also given by the Fathers of Chiesa Nuova to the beautiful Church our St. Philip built. The Invocation, REGINA SACRATISSIMI ROSARII, ORA PRO NOBIS, together with the date 1633, shows that the Holy Father Leo XIII. was in reality only reviving an ancient devotion when he added this same invocation to the Litany of Loreto.

The frescoes which illustrate the First Part of this book deserve more than mere mention in a preface; and a separate notice describes them. It only remains to express to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk my gratitude for his kind and generous permission to reproduce and use them here. They and the pictures in the Second Part alike show the superiority of Catholic artists in interpretation of the Text of Holy Scripture.

The Second Part of "Rosa Mystica" is divided like the First, and treats of Other Joys, Sorrows, Glories and Prerogatives of Our Blessed Lady. It will be found that some provision is made for spiritual reading or meditation for all the Feasts of Our Lady throughout the year as shown in the accompanying table.

May MARY IMMACULATE, Mother of God and Mother of Men, deign to accept her poor servant's little tribute of filial love and humble praise.

KENELM DIGBY BEST.

The London Oratory, 1904.

Preface

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Giovanni di San Giovanni (Mannozzi) painted his Mysteries of the Rosary on the walls of the Annalena convent at Florence. His frescoes illustrate the First Part of this work. Great artist though he was, he did not avoid the faults of the period and the Botticelli school to which he belonged. We are told by historians that he was capricious and bizarre in his work. This is shown by these copies. Much there is that is beautiful; but here and there startling carelessness and provoking defects appear. He dwelt in a house opposite the convent in the Via Romana, and may have thought himself privileged on that account to paint as he pleased.

The Fifteen Rosary Mysteries are accurately represented by him till he reaches the two last. Then he represents the *Death* of Our Lady instead of her Assumption, and instead of the customary Coronation he depicts the Madonna giving the Rosary to St. Dominic and other Saints and devout persons. I was told by a very learned Dominican that in earlier ages much liberty was allowed as to the choice and arrangement of Rosary Mysteries. But long before Giovanni's time our present order was in common use, and I am quite unable to account for his eccentric departure from the beaten track. I searched in vain

through volumes of his schiffe, with the permission and Notes on the most obliging assistance of Professor Ferri, Custodian Illustrations of Designs at the Royal Galleries in Florence. The valuable help of Comm. Prof. Dott. Guido Biagi, Librarian of the Laurentian Library, was most courteously rendered, but unavailingly, though he was good enough to make me acquainted with the account of Mannozzi given in the historical pages of Baldinucci. There seems to be no likelihood at present of obtaining more information. I hazard the conjecture that, with the work of Beato Angelico before him, Giovanni may have said in turn "Come te non voglio, melio di te non posso," and characteristically taken an independent line in representing the Mysteries. Leaving the work of Giovanni intact, I venture to add two other representations of these final Mysteries about which there can be no question: and I am unable to resist the temptation of inserting yet another illustration to the Mystery of the Resurrection.

A brief account of the Annalena convent is given by Ricca in the Notizie Istoriche, and the very interesting Guide to Florence by A. Begg describes its origin at great length. It appears that either for private revenge or political reasons an aristocratic bandit, Baldaccio dell' Anguillara, was stabbed and cast from the window of the council chamber to the pavement of the Piazza Signoria by order of the Gonfaloniere Orlandini. The crime was committed September 6, 1441. Baldaccio's widow saved their infant son by strategy, but after a time the boy sickened and died. The childless widow then made a home for other widows in tribulation, and obtained from Pope Nicholas V. a brief dated Dec. 12, 1450, giving her permission to found a

convent of the Third Order of St. Dominic. St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, subsequently procured another Papal brief which authorized her to build her church, convent and cloisters of Santa Chiara. As the lady's name was Anna Elena, it was given to her convent in an abbreviated way dear to Italians. In the beginning of last century the convent through lack of subjects was suppressed, the property purchased by Luigi Gargani, who built there his Goldoni theatre. The theatre in turn disappeared, and at present the school and convent of the Sisters of Santa Dorotea replace the establishment of Annalena. The frescoes of Mannozzi, its frescoes, are now for the first time introduced to the artistic world by the skilful work of Messrs. Phillips.**

With many of the Illustrations of the Second Part readers are familiar, either from acquaintance with the originals or the reproductions of Messrs. Alinari and Brogi, who permit the present copies of their beautiful photographs to be made. There are about a dozen other illustrations, such as those of the Seven Dolours, which are taken from Scio's Spanish Bible printed at Madrid in 1794. According to Brunet, these were borrowed from the edition of the De Sacy Bible printed at Paris between 1789 and 1804. Be it admitted even by Bib. Soc. that such editions in the Catholic countries of the Catholic Church prove an earlier and greater devotion to the Bible than prejudiced Protestantism fed upon calumnies has been allowed to recognise. These illustrations are from the designs of Marillier and Monsiau.

The last illustration is from a modern fresco by a devout painter whose friendship I was fortunate

^{*} H. G. Phillips & Co., 7 Red Lion Court, Fleet Street.

enough to enjoy. If I remember aright, he told me Notes on the that there was spread on the canvas a moist "body" Illustrations of distemper composed of whiting, vinegar and white of egg, on which the colours were laid, and that this was the earliest process of fresco painting used before artists let their colours sink into the damp cement or plaster of the walls on which they are still to be seen, and from which they still can be detached, as were these Arundel frescoes of Giovanni di San Giovanni.

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Sunday wit	thin Oc	rt. Epij	oli.	The Finding Jesus in the Temple
Jan. 23				Espousals of B.V.M.
Feb. 2				Presentation and Purification of B.V.M.
Feb. 17				Flight into Egypt
March 19				St. Joseph, Spouse of B.V.M.
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Friday in I	1	Week		The Seven Dolours
Good Frida				The Crucifixion, the Desolation of B.V.M.
Easter Day				The Resurrection
April 16				Dedication of the Church of the Oratory
				The Ascension
Whit Sund				The Descent of the Holy Ghost
May 12				The Humility of B.V.M.
May 24				Our Lady Help of Christians
Sunday aft				Most Pure Heart of B.V.M.
July 2				Visitation of B.V.M.
July 16				Our Lady of Mount Carmel
August 5				Our Lady of the Snow
August 15.				The Assumption of B.V.M.
				The Coronation of B.V.M.
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Fourth Su				The Patronage of B.V.M.
Nov. 21				The Presentation of B.V.M.
Dec. 8				The Immaculate Conception of B.V.M.
Dec. 18				The Expectation of B.V.M.
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D				St. John Ap. & Evan., the Chaplain of
xii.				Our Lady

A THANKSGIVING FOR

THE DEFINITION OF THE DOCTRINE

OF THE

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

O sing the hymns of heaven, how pure
The mind and heart must be!
On earth this only can secure
Concordant harmony

With those sweet sounds the Blessed raise This day to Mary's love and praise.

Lord, send a Seraph from above
To cleanse our lips and heart;
Admit us to this task of love,
Ah, let us bear a part!
Thy Mother's triumph is achieved,
All own her Without Sin Conceived.

Then, Ave Virgin pure! In thee
No stain of sin is found:
Eve, Adam sinned, but thou art free,
While all is sin around—
The Only One of Adam's race,
O wondrous Miracle of grace!

The Only One! Yes, all the rest
Were ruined by his Fall,
And lost that happiness so blessed
Which God had planned for all—
The Only One in whom we trace
No token of that dire disgrace.

God knew, O Mary Undefiled!

How much thou hadst to bear—
What torments with thy Suffering Child
Thou wouldst consent to share.

Could one whom sin had touched endure
What He shrank from who was Most Pure?

Ah! could the Holy One with sin Be ever reconciled? Although He came our souls to win Souls wounded and defiled—His pure Divinity could ne'er Foal sin's contamination bear.

And so, admiring Angels saw
This Miracle of grace
One Maid exempted from the law
Imposed on Adam's race:
And she alone from sin was free
Of whom the Saviour born would be.

Thus had we learned, thus long believed,
Thus in the Fathers read;
The same is now of Faith received,
By Holy Church decreed
At length the Doctrine is defined,
Imposed on every heart and mind.

What Mary's clients long have held
Is now the Faith of all:
None hesitates, none has rebelled—
All join her children's call.
O Mary Without Sin Conceived!
By thee be all our wants relieved!

K. D. B., Ampleforth,

A.D. MD.CCC.LIV.

THE ROSARY

(INTRODUCTORY)

OR many years, one month—and that one the best and brightest—has been so completely given up to devotions to Our Blessed Lady that it is commonly called The Month of Mary. May, with its freshness, its flowers, its springtide of hope, sends us all, however unworthy, in company with the little children, the innocent, the young, to the Lady Altar with our flowers, our lights, our hymns and prayers. Another month is also consecrated to Mary. In 1889 Pope Leo XIII., of glorious memory, declared it to be his greatest honour and happiness, amid the sorrows and anxieties which encompassed him, to dedicate Autumn's golden October to the MYSTICAL ROSE. To this end the Holy Father enjoined upon the Faithful in perpetuity a daily recital of the Rosary throughout the month, and added to the Litany of Loreto the Invocation Regina Sacratissimi Rosarii, Ora pro nobis.

The Devotions of the two months do not clash; rather, the reverse is the case, and the one supplements the other. In May, we chiefly aim at praising our Mother, extolling her while we cheer ourselves with the contemplation of her many prerogatives: and we give expression to these sentiments by our offerings to the Lady Altar and our hymns and praises. Whereas, in this second Month of Mary, we go to the Queen of

the Most Holy Rosary, certainly to do homage, but perhaps also for our own welfare, while professing our readiness to follow her royal standard in the battle which in these last days is raging everywhere between the Woman clothed with the sun and the Dragon, the New Eve and the Old Serpent.

We acknowledge Mary as our Divinely-appointed Leader, chosen by God for the deliverance of His Church, even as were Judith and Esther in the days of old. Judith cut off the head of the cruel enemy of her people; Mary crushes the head of the Serpent, and confounds Satan's pride by the all-prevailing power of her humility. Esther pleaded in her gentleness and beauty for her people against their wicked enemy; Mary intercedes for us her Christian people, her dearly-acquired children. When a leader is recognized as given by God, the battle is well nigh won. A Maid of Orleans is sufficient to put the best of troops to flight by virtue of her destiny. The Almighty has ever chosen the weak things and the lowly to confound the strong; God has chosen Mary to avenge on Satan the evil he craftily did to Eve and her posterity. Therefore, we see Mary appearing not only as the Type of all that is good, and beautiful, and pure, not only as the dear, and gentle, and lowly-hearted Mother of Jesus, but as the "Woman clothed with the sun, crowned with the twelve stars, and terrible as an army set in array." And what weapon is it that Our Lady places in the hands of her army? It is something simpler than the sling of David; it is that peculiar form of prayer which is recognized even by those outside the Church as the distinctive armour and weapon of the Seed of the Woman-it is the

ROSARY, the Beads, the Corona. It is the Chaplet The Rosary or the Garland of prayer, fragrant with the perfume of Divine Mysteries, arranged and woven so as to win our minds—to all that is white and pure and innocent in the Life of the Lily of Israel, the Cause of our Joy—to all the Sorrow and compassion excited in her by the red Wounds of Jesus and the Blood-stained Cross on which He expired in her presence—and so to lead us on to the contemplation of the gold glory of Heaven into which by His Ascension and her Assumption all Their earthly Joy and Sorrow were finally absorbed. The Mysteries of the Rosary are the Mysteries of Faith, that Faith which overcomes the world and gives victory to the cause of God.

We owe the Devotion of the Rosary to the great Saint Dominic, a Saint whose heart burned with the Apostolic spirit, whose lips were eloquent with Gospel truths, whose brow was bright with the light of holiness and purity, the starlike symbol of the chastity of this chosen client of the Virgin of Virgins. And it is hard to see how any one could or would try to question the right of the Saint to this honour, seeing that the highest authority has sanctioned the almost universal opinion that Our Blessed Lady taught the devotion to St. Dominic. All must admit that St. Dominic with his Beads won the victories of the Church over her enemies in the twelfth century. A heresy of error, rebellion, and violence was devastating the south of France, and threatening the whole of Europe. It is undesirable to describe its excesses and horrors. It was finally stamped out by the miraculous victories of Simon de Montfort: but these victories of his were attributed by the heretics themselves to

Dominic rather than to Simon. They said that they feared Dominic and his Beads far more than Simon and his troops. They owned themselves defeated, not by the valiant warrior, brave and unsparing, but by the gentle Saint, who fought against them in secret, in peaceful guise, "with sweetness, and prayers, and tears." In short, St. Dominic brought the help of the Mother of God, who "alone has destroyed all the heresies of the entire world."

The founding and building of His Church is the greatest work of God upon the earth. The starting of a false religion, the forming a rival camp, the erection of a church that can and must err--this is an act of insolent pride, a separation which is the revolt of discord and hatred against Christian unity and love. Therefore did the Apostles warn the early Christians to beware of heresies and "sects of damnation;" St. Paul saying: May the God of peace crush Satan under your feet speedily. The sin of heresy seems to be almost the most wicked of all sins; for it makes a sin into a religion. And therefore St. Paul attributes it so especially to the devil, as being his master-piece of deceit, and malicious rivalry of Christ. And according to the promise of God, to Mary is entrusted the glorious task of crushing the Serpent's head, and of defending the Bride of Christ. His Mother hastens to the aid of His Spouse. Mary is the true Defender of the Faith, and if the most wicked spirit ever prevails against such a Protectress, it can only be through our craven fault.

It was, then, as the champion of Mary that in the twelfth century St. Dominic went forth, Rosary in

hand, to conquer heresy. We can dismiss from our The Rosary imagination what may be called the Protestant picture of a martial monk, with sword to slay and torch to burn all heretics. History gives quite another account, to which the very Albigenses themselves testified. He brought them back to Christ, as an Apostle of Christ would have brought them back—"by sweetness, by preaching, by prayers, by tears." The only weapon he used was strangely and supernaturally slight and insignificant, like that with which David gave battle to Goliah: for as David's sling and pebbles prevailed over the giant's strength so was heresy vanquished by the beads of the most holy Rosary.

But let no one think St. Dominic the only Saint who wielded Mary's weapon against the enemies of the Church. In the sixteenth century, when the Turk threatened Christendom, St. Pius V., taken from the Order of St. Dominic to be Supreme Pontiff, commanded Rosary Processions in Rome. And—let it be said—there was at that time yet another Saint, a Saint with his staff and beads, the Apostle of Rome, our own St. Philip; and he, at the bidding of the Pope, brought his children from the Oratory to walk in those Processions. And thus by the Rosary the Christain fleet was made victorious in the Gulf of Lepanto.

The Rosary is an Apostolic Devotion: and for this reason. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that: They were persevering in prayer with the women, and with Mary the Mother of Jesus. To say the Rosary is to persevere in prayer with the Mother of Jesus. To meditate on its Mysteries is to know Jesus. Grant that the Beads are the Biblia

Pauperum: vet thus do "the Poor have the Gospel preached to them," thus do we know our Lord in them as He is known in the Gospels, as the Apostles knew Him -through Mary. And to know Jesus is eternal life, as not to know Him is eternal death. For eternal death is the punishment of culpable ignorance of Christ. When men refuse to listen, refuse to be taught, love their darkness better than the Light of the World, choose for themselves what doctines they like, and reject others which they do not approve or understand—all this makes up a guilty ignorance which will not go unpunished. God reveals Himself, but they pay no heed: they say, "Lo, here is Christ or there," as they choose to think: and there is heresy in this: for heresy simply means choice: it is a Greek word: and a heretic is a chooser in religion, one who insubordinately acts in opposition to the obedience of the faith, and protests against authoritative teaching. With the same measure they measured to others it will be measured to them. they refused the knowledge of God which His Church was commissioned to impart: and on the Last Day God will say to them, I KNOW YOU NOT.

Since heresy is recruited from the victims of ignorance, the way to fight heresy is to instruct the ignorant; and it is this precisely which the Rosary of Mary accomplishes, making Jesus known through Mary in Their Joys, Their Sorrows, Their Glories. For joy, sorrow, glory are the substance of all human life, the complete history of an immortal soul. In the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary we have a truthful, a vivid Gospel History of Him Who "dwelt amongst us." That Life of God on earth, which began in the

bosom of Mary, which now rests in the Bosom of the The Rosary Eternal Father, is our short and easy Gospel, when divided into the natural chronological stages of its Joys, Sorrows, and Glories: and so while we repeat our Beads, the simplest among us come to know Jesus as He was first known on earth—through Mary. This is the Gospel way: in the beginning "They found the Child with His Mother;" in the end "There stood near the cross of Jesus Mary His Mother."

But the Rosary is not only a means of interior knowledge of Jesus Christ, it is an outward sign, dreaded by heretics with superstitious fear, of a true and fervent Catholic. The Cross is the Sign of the Son of Man, and the Rosary is the Sign of Mary. It is a sign of the loyal, childlike, catholic spirit of submission to the Church, a spirit which is directly opposed to all heresy and disobedience of mind and heart, a spirit which alone admits to the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us, then, remember that before England dreamed of apostasy, of heresy, there was Laurence of England telling the Beads of Mary at St. Dominic's side: there was a Gilbert of France preaching at Canterbury, and building his Priory at Oxford. And in the present "vast war of ignorance" around us, we must have recourse to the same weapon, and overcome ignorance with the knowledge of Jesus imparted by these Mysteries, going to Him even as He came to us-through Mary.

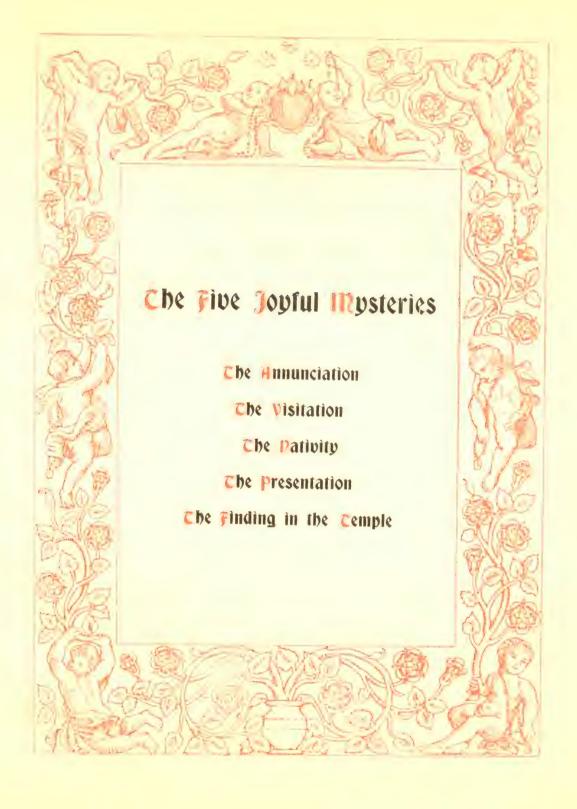
Let us quickly betake ourselves to prayer, the prayer of the Holy Rosary, priests and people reciting it with emulous devotion. Ave Maria, again and again—in the crowded church, in the home, in the pilgrimage, on the mountain heights, on the seashore,

and out upon the deep. How musical the greeting that mounts to Mary from this Vale of Tears! Our Lady must rejoice to hear the sweet words: for they make her Heart thrill with the memory of that moment, when "the Ave of that midnight" was first spoken, and the ineffable Mystery of her Divine Maternity was accomplished. Beautiful repetition! like to the repetition and multiplication of all God's fair and beautiful works, the stars in the heavens and the flowers of earth, the Lily and the Rose to which the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary is so often likened. Beautiful repetition! for Bead after Bead is dropped on the symbolical Corona, Ave after Ave is murmured—the language of love, eternal, yet ever new!

Cherish the Rosary, delight to handle it, as did St. Philip. The Beads of the Heavenly Queen are the Beads of your Mother: Bind them in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck: when thou walkest let them go with thee—when thou sleepest, let them keep thee—and when thou wakest, talk with them (Prov. vi. 21).

ROSA MYSTICA PART I.









FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE ANNUNCIATION

HERE are two ways of forgetting our miseries, our sufferings and sorrows: one is by giving our attention to earthly pursuits and pleasures—a dangerous way, and at most affording but a brief distraction and respite—the other is to fill mind and heart with the things of God, to let all our senses and affections fasten on divine Mysteries, and so escape from our littleness, meanness, selfishness, from surrounding and impending temptations into the beauty, the height and depth and breadth of divine truths.

The Feast of the Annunciation brings us such a Mystery, into which we may joyously plunge, in which we may take refuge, and lose ourselves in wonder and worship. For it is a day of stupendous miracles—of impossibilities accomplished by the power of God, to Whom nothing is impossible or difficult.

We well know—Lady Day proclaims it—who it is that has a place so conspicuous and so prominent in the mysteries and wonders of this Feast. Amid the invisible energies and operations of God which envelop, pervade and possess her, she and she only is in truth visible to us. The silence of her humility has not prevented but, rather, has contributed to our knowledge of what took place; for it moved the Holy Ghost to inspire His Evangelist to give us a full and detailed account of the things which Mary pondered in her heart. Three

wonders, three miracles, sanctify and adorn the Feast of the Annunciation, the union of Faith and the human heart, of Virginity and Maternity, of God and Man. And it is because of the first union that the other two take place.

Let us consider before everything the greatness of the Faith of Mary. Already we have said with Gabriel, Hail, Full of grace! let us now with Elizabeth exclaim, Blessed art thou who hast believed! Unlike Zachary, who doubted a less matter, Mary believed, and because of her Faith God was able to do His glorious Miracle. Are we not told that the incredulity of the inhabitants prevented our Lord "from doing any miracles there" (Mark vi. 5)? Do we not know from the Word of God that "without Faith it is impossible to please God;" that again and again our Lord praised the Faith He found, though not in Israel; that He blamed unbelief, even though the blindness came from excessive but ill-regulated love, like that of Thomas? But have we ever sufficiently realised how acceptable to God was the Faith with which Mary listened to His Angel and received His message? See what our own Faith amounts to, and what it effects. It is an act of the intellect, assisted by divine grace, whereby our mind assents with certainty to revealed truth. There is a certain union, brought about by obedient listening, between our internal knowledge and God's external truth. See what was accomplished by Mary's Faith. The "substance of things hoped for," instead of making an impression on her mind, was taken possession of by her. With her FIAT MIHI, she ascended on high, and took the Eternal Word from the Bosom of the Father into her own, and thus, by the power of the Most High and the

operation of the Holy Ghost, the Virgin became the The Mother of God, and God was made Man. The power of Annunciation the Most High is that beautiful, silent attribute which accompanies many others in their manifestation, for it is their activity. In all deeds of God's love, of His mercy, of His justice, it is this power, this omnipotence which accomplishes them. It is also given to us, in our mysterious participation of the Divine Nature, as the strength of our Faith. It is the answer which we vouchsafe to difficulties. It brings peace and calm into that beautiful darkness where the light of Faith softly shines. In the hour of the Incarnation Omnipotence and Faith met in the Heart of Mary, and the result was the accomplishment of a more glorious and marvellous work than the Creation of the world. "In the Incarnation, the operating cause was the power of the Most High, the co-operating cause the Faith of the Virgin." Therefore is it that when Elizabeth praised the Blessed Virgin because she had believed, Mary praised that other Cause, saying, "He that is Mighty hath done great things to me!" "I will espouse thee to Me in Faith" (Osee ii. 20) was the promise; this is the promised espousal, this the grand Faith, which after so many broken covenants maintains one that is New and Eternal, an Everlasting Covenant that includes all generations and an entire world. "By Faith the Saints obtained promises" (Heb. xi. 33), and to be recipient of a divine promise was in itself a "reward exceeding great:" but Mary's Faith obtained the Promised One Himself. "He that cometh to God must believe," the Apostle tells us: but in Mary was a Faith to which God came. At the assent of her Faith, at the consent of her will, the Father communicated to her Virginity a participation in the

power of His Divine Fecundity, and so the Word of the Father Almighty spoken in His bosom reached the bosom of the Faithful Virgin—not in echo, but actually—and Mary became the Fairest Gospel, better than Old and New Testament, for she contained the Living Word of God. "She is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty" (Wis. 7).

The startling, astounding feature of the Mystery is to many the stillness, the quietness in which it took place. The village around was steeped in silent moonlight, its inhabitants were held in peaceful slumber. No Angels appeared, no brightness shone outside the lowly, unpretentious cottage of the carpenter Joseph and his Maiden Wife. All things were their customary aspect, and no eye watched to pierce the veil behind which was hid the Substance Hoped for yet unexpected, unlooked for in this place and at this hour. But she to whom the Angel Gabriel was sent was found watchful and at her midnight prayer. In secrecy the Angel declared the will of the unseen and hidden God, and in sweet, low accents Mary whispered her submission to that will, and in the calmness of childlike confidence and Faith in the protection of the power of the Most High became the Mother of the God Who created her. It was the greatest of the "invisible things of God," and therefore was unknown and unnoticed—Mundus eum non cognovit — Nazareth had no suspicion that God's Angel had been with Mary, Nazareth was utterly unconscious of the presence of the Word made Flesh, and Mary kept the "Secret of the King." Thus is it ever with the great things of God. No outward token, no noise, no perceptible change was apparent when Jesus

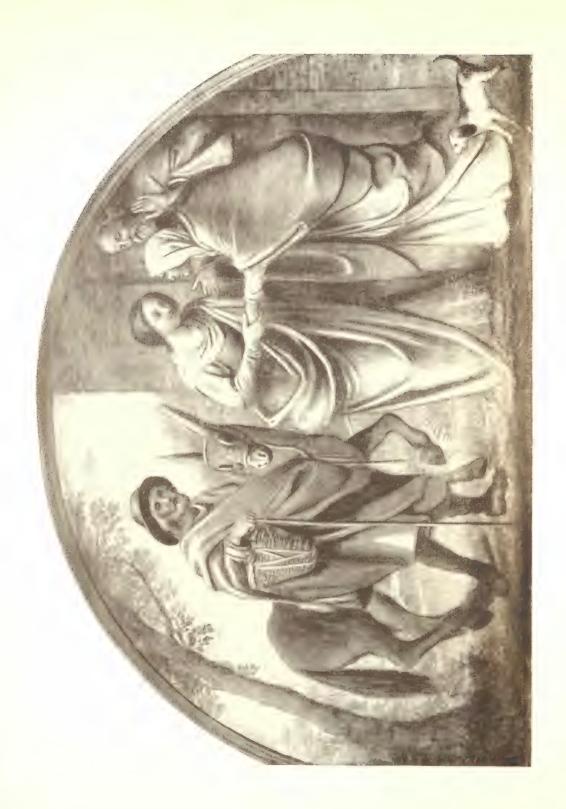
first worked His miracle of Transubstantiation; and now The it is only the little sanctuary bell of Consecration which Annunciation gives warning that the same miracle is performed by His priests in their daily Mass. We believe; but we have the Written Word, and the Word made Flesh has dwelt amongst us: Mary believed in the teeth of her humility, on the assurance of an Angel; she was indeed Blessed, for her Faith became the co-operating cause of the Incarnation.

The Annunciation is then the Feast of the Faith of Mary. But, should we desire to study the characteristics of that Faith, especially those we may hope to imitate in our poor little fashion, we must anticipate, and watch it displaying itself in her intercourse and her dealings with the Holy One born of her. All was natural supernaturalness; there was no aiming at effect, no studied ceremonial; she had accepted an office whose duties were declared by nature, whose rights were not annihilated because of the Divinity of her Child. Therefore in holiest simplicity she gave Him the exact treatment which she felt He desired; she fulfilled her maternal duties, she used her maternal rights. thrilled with maternal joys, she throbbed with maternal sorrows; she shrank not from the language of maternal authority: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" She was ever calm, meek, earnest, dignified, loving and adoring, and this with a Faith which was keen and clear as is the Sight of others. Eye had not seen, nor had it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God Incarnate prepared and brought to His Holy Mother, yet she bore it all without excitement. "No man shall see God and live;" yet God lived in her, she dwelt with God. "No man hath seen God at any

time;" yet what is there that Mary has not done, what maternal action has Mary omitted, in exercising her privileges? The power of the Most High was made perfect in the sublime and beautiful trustfulness of her Faith-filled Heart. And when at last she directly addresses us and tells us, "Whatsoever He shall say to you that do," our Mother gives us a lesson in Faith. It was in answer to her Faith that the first Miracle of His Public Life was worked. The humility, the quiet prayer, the look and gentle whisper, "They have no wine," were enough to make our Lord anticipate the hour, and do miracles before the appointed time.

Women are ever strong in great Faith—do they inherit it from Mary?

"Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief," for the sake of Thy Mother, the Faithful Virgin!



SECOND JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE VISITATION

of her Cousin Elizabeth, and so it came to pass that we have a full account of Mary's visit given to us in the Gospel. The Archangel may claim our thanks for the words of our Hail Mary, which he himself spoke, then for those of St. Elizabeth, to whom his news despatched our Lady, and even for the Magnificat itself, which but for the Visitation would not have been sung out of heaven.

Mary, rising up, went in haste into the hill country, so soon as she had received the tidings St. Gabriel gave her. It was on the third day of the Incarnation that she is thought to have begun the journey which her gentle kindness, courtesy, and regard for the claims of a revered kinswoman made compulsory on her charity. She knew herself to be the Mother of the Lord. Her heart was brimful of joy and consolation, but she was "silent in her love." She reached Hebron at the hour of evening. Miracles began at once. At the sound of her unrecorded words of greeting, the sanctification of Elizabeth's babe took place, the secret of her own Maternity was revealed, and Elizabeth had the honour and happiness of being the first mortal to adore the Word made Flesh with words of praise and gratitude. Warned by the Precursor, stirred by the mysterious movement of her unborn child, she recognized the

dignity of Mary's Maternity, and gave her the inspired greeting which all generations have made use of in their Salutation of Our Lady. The child of Elizabeth, the Baptist still unborn, was sanctified by the voice of Mary; his mother testified to the fact. At the sound of her voice, he was sanctified, cleansed from sin, justified, filled with the Holy Ghost, confirmed in grace so as never in his life to commit a fault or omit a duty, given a full use of reason before it was due, told of the Godhead of our Lord, made glad in His coming. John was the first after Mary exultingly to worship Jesus, and he danced for joy in his mother's bosom to the music of the Magnificat. Thus the Baptist may be held to be the first Saint chosen, and loved, and adopted by Mary. She brought him Jesus; her song was sung for the baby Baptist, and its echoes vibrated in his heart till the end of life, and encouraged him to style himself the "Bridegroom's Friend." And so, at the evening hour, the hour when God in Paradise promised the Redeemer, the hour when the dove returned with her olive branch to the ark, the Hymn of Mary's thanksgiving ascended to heaven from the city where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had dwelt.

Never rose a sweeter, holier, or more acceptable hymn of praise. Many of the great benefits of God have drawn forth song from the prototypes of Mary. There is the Song of Mary, sister of Moses, on the shores of the Red Sea, the Song of Debborah beside the torrent Cison, the Song of Anna at Silo, of Judith at Bethulia—they were all only faint preludes of the Hymn of Hebron. And it may be said of them that the voices of the Red Sea of vengeance, the roaring of its receding, subsiding waters, the hoarse call of wild torrents sweeping away the slain,

the grateful shouts of the beleaguered Bethulians mingle The too plainly with these songs. One only is an exception Visitation—that which Anna sang in thanksgiving for her son in Silo's sacred grove; and it seems not to have been unknown to the Virgin Mother, for she used some of its phrases for her own evening Hymn in the vineyards of Hebron.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." Joy, praise, thanks-giving make God great in His creature's mind. And that sinless soul of Mary in this spirit refers to her God all praise which is offered to herself. Joy, for the Word within her Heart, the eternal Joy of the Eternal Father. Praise, for her Immaculate Conception and subsequent preservation from evil. Thanksgiving, for she knew, as none other could, the greatness of the deeds done by the Almighty in her behalf; and therefore she sang the grandest Hymn of gratitude that has ever risen from the earth.

"My spirit hath exulted in God my Saviour." Mary replies to Elizabeth's words; and without contradicting them—for this would have been unreality and not humility—she weaves them into her own theme, adding the music of her virginal voice. "God has made Himself little, has emptied Himself in order to be mine, but my soul magnifies Him the more, and my spirit exults, O Elizabeth, in God, Who is my Saviour as well as the Redeemer of thy child!"

One joy and gladness there is which is for the forgiven, which is not therefore for Mary nor God's Angels. "Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui"—"restore to me the joy of thy salvation." Some such exultation must have thrilled the tearful heart of Mary Magdalen, when the Good Shepherd overtook her in her wandering, and she

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found that He refused not her repentance and the timid homage of her trembling lips on His wearied feet. Others have exulted for hope: "Abraham your father rejoiced to see My day, he saw it and was glad." But joy and exultation in fulness belong to charity, they are the fruits of the Spirit, are caused by possession of God, by union with Him. Such must have been the exultation of the youthful Apostle, in the sweet possession of his God, when his head rested unreprovedly on the bosom of Jesus. But what are all hope, all love and possession compared to Mary's? "Who will give thee to me for my brother, at the breast of my mother, that find thee without, and kiss thee?" To us He is thus given-Nobis natus, nobis datus but to Mary He is given as her own, the Babe of her own bosom. If her soul has magnified Him for His greatness, how much more shall her spirit exult in Him for His goodness! He is her God, her Saviour, her First, her Only One, her sole, unshared Love, her soul's Spouse, the Eternal Lover of her Purity, the sweet Fruit of her virginal Maternity, as He is of His Father's incommunicable Fecundity. Her spirit is, then, impelled to her God, to God not far away from her, not beyond her, not in the distant heavensbut to God within her, to God her Saviour, or-since the Hebrew language of her Song admits the sweet Name -- to God her Jesus.

The God of love is "a God of consuming fire:" those who are dearest to Him have ever found it so. Tribulations, the fuel of love, have been the portion of most Saints. Some God has tried by the fire of divine love alone, as He "sent down fire from above" and descended in a Globe of Fire into the heart of our holy Father Philip, forcing the Saint to cry out: "No more,

O Lord, no more! I shall die, O Lord!" Within Mary The is He Who is avowedly "come to cast fire on the earth:" Visitation the Holy Ghost must overshadow her, the power of the Most High must sustain her, for she exults in this presence of God, the Light of Light, the Splendour of the Father, and already the Sacred Heart of Jesus has enveloped the Immaculate Heart with Its own flames of love! The golden glow of an Eastern sun-set lights up the heavenly form and face of Mary as she stands before the entranced Elizabeth and chants her ecstatic Hymn. But are not those upraised eyes shining with a divine light which fills them from the Fountain of Light within? And the hands that are folded on her bosom are they clasping her Treasure, or lifted in thanksgiving? Who can say? They seem lost in the dazzling effulgence of light and love.

O Children of Mary! would you feel as Mary felt? I mean, of course, proportionally to your weakness, and less grace. Kneel at those altar rails in Holy Communion. As really, though sacramentally, each one can then say: "My heart and my flesh have exulted in the Living God." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robes of justice hath He covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels" (Isaiah Ixi.). Then surely you too may say: "Exultavit spiritus meus in Deo Salutari meo."

The Church loves and reveres the Magnificat of Mary. She uses it in the most solemn and public portion of the Divine Office, her most majestic tones are reserved for its chant; the candles of the acolyths are lit, the incense of the thurible is burnt; for Mary's Magnificat is a part

of the Gospel sung each day at Vespers, as S. John's In Principio is said each day at Mass.

Dion. Cart.

St. Bede

Hug.S. Vict.

In the Magnificat, you may consider "the dignity, the grace, the beauty of her who sings, the sublimity and majesty of the Song, the inflamed seraphic devotion with which she sings." "Every creature magnifies God, but Mary excels every creature, and is the magnificence of God." "The Magnificat is an emanation from the floods of Divine Light which inundated her intelligence." Mary is also called Vox Verbi, the Voice of the Word, as though the Magnificat were her Child's Song. Indeed, one of the earliest Christian writers says: "Elizabeth rejoiced, the Baptist stirred her heart, Mary magnified God, Jesus her Babe inspired her." And one of the latest writers thus expresses the same thought, showing that devotion to Mary is the same in every age. "Straightway the Word arose within His Mother's bosom, and enthroned Himself upon her sinless Heart, and borrowing her voice, which had already been the instrument of His power, the sacrament of John's redemption, He sang the unfathomable Magnificat out of whose depths music has gone on streaming upon the enchanted earth all ages since."

Faber

Though we poor mortals were absent when the morning stars praised God and the sons of God made a joyful melody, yet we will not repine: our earth has heard the music of the voice of the Mother of God, and we are content, and envy not the harmonies of heaven. "The winter is past, the rains are over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come. Arise, our love, our dove, our beautiful one, and come; let thy voice sound in our ears, for thy voice is sweet and thy face is comely."

But the Visitation did not end with the singing The of the Magnificat. "She abode with her cousin three Visitation months." How the Baptist must have continued to rejoice in her presence! What interior communications must have passed between him and his Lord! Then he began to be "the Intimate of Jesus," "the Friend of the Bridegroom," the Companion of the Lamb of God, remaining ever united in spirit, though perhaps never near our Lord till Jesus came to the river and bade His Baptist give Him baptism.

After three months Mary left Elizabeth. We are not told whether her departure was before or after the birth of John, and there is a division of opinion among the Fathers of the Church on this point. Let us follow those who judge that Mary waited till John's birth, to bless and caress the babe, to cheer and congratulate the happy mother, and fled away only from the gathering of Elizabeth's friends and neighbours. She left her Child's forerunner to grow and wax strong in his father's house at Hebron amidst the vineyards of South Palestine, in sight of the vapours that hang above the Dead Sea, near the desert where he dwelt till "the day of his manifestation to Israel." And Mary hastened back to her home in the green uplands of Galilee, to await in peace and seclusion the coming of her own Lamb of God.

THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE NATIVITY

OR outbursts of joyous affection and love there is no day like a birthday. Think of all its kind good wishes, the greetings, and the presents that give such pleasure. All very natural, homely, common-place, some will say. Yes, so it is: but, for all that, good and pleasant, and if earthly not without heaven's blessing. Indeed, when to natural joy spiritual joys are added, it seems like a portion of heaven's own happiness. And, blessed be God! it is in this way that Christmas Day is kept, with earthly and heavenly joy and happiness, because it is the Birthday of our God Incarnate, of our Saviour, our Brother, our "Sweet Lord Jesus Christ."

Even in Protestant England this day is kept in a holy, happy, Catholic spirit. At the Adeste Fideles, all hasten to Bethlehem and the Crib. The Gospel tells how the Shepherds found Mary and Joseph and the Child lying in a manger, and—without perceiving it—the English let the Scriptures make Catholics of them for a time, and without any misgivings they offer, like the Shepherds and the Kings, their adoration to the Word made Flesh, their reverence to His Virgin Mother and to St. Joseph, His Foster Father. Now, since so much has been lost and forgotten here, why has the English race clung to the Catholicity of Christmastide? It has been an English devotion from the first. Nor is it strange





that this should be the case. For, as St. Gregory the The Great relates, on Christmas Day St. Augustine baptized Nativity ten thousand of the Angles, who for his object broke the ice of the Kentish river Swale, and from the cold water came out Angels. They were our fore-fathers in the Faith, and it is from them and their times that England's devotion to Christmas is derived and dates.

But joy is the birthday feeling; so let us when contemplating this Mystery surrender our hearts to joy —joy in Jesus. "Behold," said the Angel, "I bring you tidings of great joy." And we will begin with that one joy which although most human had no source in the usual mortal sorrow. I mean that joy of the One Mother exempt from all the laws and penalties affecting Eve and her daughters since the Fall. Our own poor mothers, as Christ Himself deigned to notice, ere they welcome us to life must submit to pain and sorrow: but with the Virgin Mother it is not so. "Like a lily she shall bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with joy and praise." The joy of a mother in her new-born is ever a fair spectacle. Even when the glory of maidenhood has been merged in the holiness of matrimony, and child-birth comes with its decreed sorrow, the face that bends over the babe is lit with a saint-like halo, with the bliss of motherhood. It is a fair sight, and our Lord Himself has pictured it to us in His own suggestive words. But at Bethlehem, the Blessed among women, the Mother of God, the Virgin who has conceived by the Holy Ghost brings forth the Saviour without forfeiting a single flower of her virginal crown. Nine months ago, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, out of her own immaculate substance she gave to the Word that garment of flesh in which He espouses human nature, and "of

the seed of Abraham taketh hold." Lightly, as a dewdrop in a flower, did that Almighty Word rest in her tabernacle, in her virginal bosom: and now, at the same midnight hour, and in the same divine way is He born—as that dewdrop may fall from the flower, as light traverses the pure crystal, as later on He entered the chamber of His disciples when its door was closed, as that tear of gladness which escapes unnoticed from her gentle eyes—so does He leave His resting-place, so does the Rod of Jesse flower, so does the Virgin Mother bring forth her God-Child. The joy of Mary is ecstatic delight when she beholds her beautiful Babe lying, like a white "Flower of the field," fair and fragrant, on her long veil nigh to the swaddling clothes, and she kneels adoringly and gazes down into the beautiful, loving, human eyes of the Eternal God waiting for the welcome of His youthful Mother.

The joy of Mary is shared by the new-born Babe; she sees it in His look; she knows that like herself He thrills with joy; she is glad, but full of wonder when she is made to feel that He rejoices in having so sweet a Mother. "The Lord thy God," sang the Prophet, "shall rejoice over thee with gladness. He will be silent in His love, He will be joyful over thee with praise." He, speechless Babe, is silent in His love—she, enraptured Mother, kneels without a word. It is too much bliss for outward sign: unless, perchance, the joy, not to break that fountain of bliss, flows from her full Heart in bright tears of happiness. At Hebron, she sang: at Bethlehem, she is silent. But both silence and song proclaim that her "spirit exults in God her Jesus." Is the silence sweeter or more eloquent than the song? Oh, no! but the joy is greater. Her Angel, the Ambassador of the Incarnation,

the Composer of the AVE, becomes her minister. Like a The priest at the altar, for whose guiding notes of praise the Nativity assistant choir listens, Gabriel-white-robed and shining -sings the Second Annunciation: "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy:" and, above the startled Shepherds, to earth, and seas, and skies, the choirs of Heaven chant their GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO.

Those Angels, those Sons of God the Father of all spirits, in the dawn of creation made joyful melody among the morning stars. Then also they greeted the Birth of the Word, that Birth which is the eternal gladness of the Godhead. Ages ago, they sang a Birthday hymn to the Begotten of the Father before all ages: but their voices and spirits are ever young and fresh; they are like Him Whose "years cannot fail." So again do they sing on Christmas Night. Now, however, they adore the temporal Birth of the same Divine Word. They obey the Divine command, "Let all the Angels of God adore Him." So they sing a celestial carol to the Word made Flesh and His happy Virgin Mother. And shall not we join our voices with theirs in praise and worship of this sweet Babe of Bethlehem? Indeed, it shall be so. Year after year, and after us from generation to generation, earth's poor exiles will greet His earthly Birth and call His Mother Blessed, till He bids us come to the Home of Homes, to His Father's House, there to behold in Beatific Vision His Eternal Birth in the Bosom of that Father.

And may the dear Roman Saint, who has made a home here with his English sons, the beautiful old man with the gay heart of an innocent boy-may he, the human Seraph of Joy, who instead of Nunc dimittis sang the Gloria in excelsis the day he died-may he be ever with us in our Christmas joy, until "We play with Thee, Beautiful Brother, On Eternity's jubilant shore "!

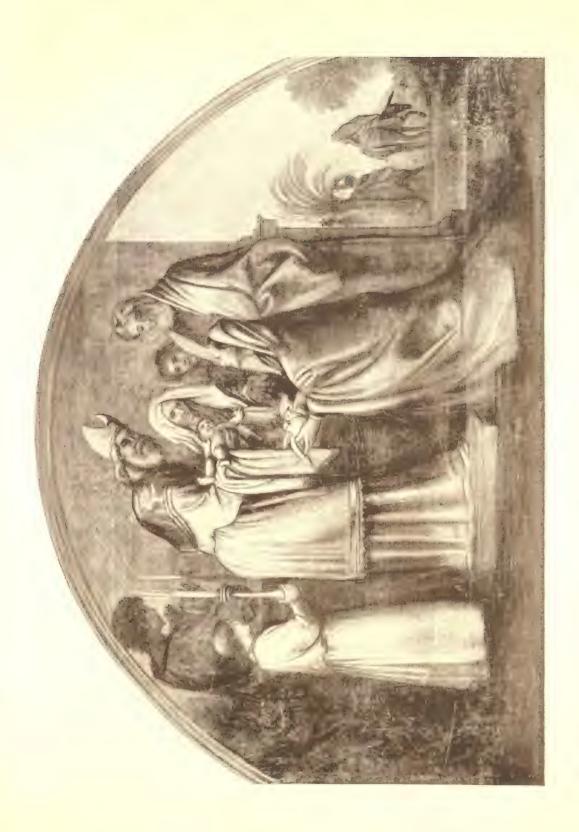
FOURTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE PRESENTATION

us from God, and He considers the way in which we receive them. It is evident that in respect to both we commit many faults; but it is hard to say in which respect the faults are more numerous. My suspicion is that there are more of them, though light in character, cropping up amidst the consolations and gifts which we receive; and for this reason, without going further, that our consolations themselves so greatly outnumber our trials. "Mercy is exalted over justice."

However it may be, as we are about to consider God's consolations and tender mercies, it is natural and fitting that we should first humble ourselves a little by calling to mind what treatment He receives from us while dealing with us so gently.

How many mistakes we make, of how many petulant impatiences we are guilty, even while we are sensibly experiencing the goodness of God! When He is most helping us we are most querulous. When He sends us some happy, holy thought to make inward sunshine in our soul, when He indulges us with some bright vision of His love and kindness, we cannot receive it simply, gaze on it quietly, and refrain from discontent when it dissolves and disappears. This poor nature of ours! Few are like the Shepherds—ready to come, and also ready to





return! We are like people who stay on idly in the The church after a service, not knowing what they want. Or Presentation we are like those who watch the sun setting, and come to feel a grudge against it, when it finally disappears and night begins.

We are very fond of singing that we are "Pilgrims of the night," but when the peculiarities, the discomforts, the risks of this journeying by night press upon us, we are in no mood to sing their praises! Yet we might submit more gracefully. As the glory of the midnight Angels was unusual to the Shepherds, so are all God's bright, sunshiny blessings and visits undue, gratuitous, and therefore to be let depart freely and cheerfully: for go they will and must; Pilgrims of the night have nothing to do with constant sunshine and light. If the glory goes to God, as sang those Angels, and peace is left to us, we should be more than satisfied. For night does not necessarily mean darkness. The Creator has by many beautiful devices prevented this. There are the flitting fire-flies, there are luminous trees, there are phosphorescent seas, there are nature's illuminants all around, from the glow-worm's pale ray, whose soft light looks like a little flower in the hedge-row, to the stars overhead and the queenly moon. And all this is outside, in nature, for good and bad alike, for the eye of the body and the utility of man in his earthly period of existence. Will there not be far more light within, for the Church, for the Faithful, for the soul, for living, saving, victorious Faith? Ah, those countless stars dwindle to a mere handful of gold dust compared to the spiritual treasures of the riches and goodness of God. There is light enough to walk on the path to heaven; there is light enough to enable those who are astray to

gain or regain the path—Lead, kindly Light, lead on! The True Light still enlightens every man that cometh into the world. He that dwells in light inaccessible so enlightens the children of the Church that we are called the "Children of light." And over and above all this, there are so many internal illuminations, blazelike moments of flashing light granted to God's Saints, His Sons of Fire, the resplendent Chosen Ones, with their glory-encircled brows, our Saint Philip with his burning Heart, and far, far surpassing all these Stars of Heaven, Mary herself—the Morning Star, the Woman clothed with the Sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and the Crown of Twelve Stars upon her majestic head.

If then we want light, and light in greatest abundance and brilliancy, we must turn to Mary, we must "Look out for thy shining, sweet Star of the Sea"! Our Lady is the Oueen of the Church, the light of the Church on earth, even as the Church is "the light of the world." All comes through Mary. The flashing Fountain, the shining Source is Jesus. High in the Heaven of heavens the throbbings of His Sacred Heart send forth the flood in ceaseless gushes of glory, Mary is bedewed with the brightness, it inundates her soul and spirit, it rises and falls and plays around her most Pure Heart, and thence speeds away, streaming from grace-shedding hands, and reaches in softest showers the thirsting multitudes of the Church in the desert. Poor night-wandering Bride of Christ, in search of the Beloved, struck and so often wounded by the guards a hostile world sets against thee, the light of Mary is thy protection and "a lamp to thy feet," fair Pilgrim of the night!

All that we have from God comes to us through Mary. The peace and rest, the sleep given to His beloved ones are

presided over and smiled upon by our Heavenly Mother, The and thereby are the safer, the deeper, the sweeter. There are Presentation times when the whole Church sleeps and takes her rest in the light of Mary's love. We must again call in the aid of material things to express what is unutterably lovely. This earth of ours bathed in beautiful moonlight must seem a fair sight to the Angels of God who slumber not. Go forth some tranquil night, and stand in the silence and the silver light and gaze up to the gentle moon, and then in thought see, above all, embracing all, supporting all, the Fatherly arms of God. So is it in the Church. All peace, all rest from sin, all holy prayer, all sanctity, all reposeful Festivals, come from Mary; and, above all the sweet sight, is our Father in Heaven!

Mary gives us light, because she brings us Jesus, and where the Mother remains there gladly lingers the Son. And, because we are poor, and little, weak and childlike, they hide somewhat of the sublime splendours which are theirs, and reappear among us somewhat as in the days of Bethlehem and Nazareth. The Images of the Mother and the Babe which content our devotion so greatly are an outward expression of the almost sacramental grace which Mary's presence and influence produce on our souls. The Feast of Candlemas explains exactly what I mean. It tells us that long ago Mary gave us Jesus, and with Him all light and joy, and that she still gives us the same Jesus, and that all rest, all peace and happiness is in the same Jesus still given to us by the same sweet Mother. So is it now, so has it ever been, and ever shall be.

How fair was that February morning when Mary came forth from the cave of Bethlehem bearing in her arms her beautiful Babe, her Lord whom she was about to present unto the Lord. As though to greet and

worship its Creator, the rising sun lingered amidst the golden clouds of the eastern sky. Its rays made millions of delicate rainbows, a carpet of sparkling jewels on the glittering dew, as the Holy Family passed, yet they were surpassed by the miracles of grace lit up in His Mother's soul by the Sun of Justice. Meanwhile all around was fair and gladsome; dear as had been the seclusion of the forty days of blissful retreat in the Stable's shelter, it was pleasant to step out into the midst of flowers and budding foliage, and the fresh, fragrant air. There was a holy joy in all Three as They passed along the silent road, and at last reached the Temple of Jerusalem.

Who awaited Their arrival? The holy old man Simeon, the holy widow Anna. The Angels of God were there, desiring to break out into another Gloria in excelsis, and there, too, the Eternal Father waited for the Offering of Mary, the Oblation of the Son. But the visible attendance was scanty indeed, and chiefly consisted of young children with still younger dove-fledglings, two of which were meekly purchased by Mary.

And then Mary presented and gave her Jesus unto God His Father, and the Offering was received. Yes, the first offering really worthy of Divine acceptance was made by the hands of Mary. The Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world was offered, at what a cost only the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of His Mother can fully know. Meekly did the Mother redeem her Little One, she bought Him back, but only for a time, only to have a mother's right to share in every suffering which the Victim of God's Justice was henceforward to undergo. And so she folded Him again in her arms, and pressed Him to her Heart, but it was to a Heart that

a few words had transfixed with woe. She wanted The to give us joy, to give us light; and generously she gave Presentation it; but, alas! the very one of us who stood forth to receive her Gift stood there also to prophesy all that it should cost. She came to the Temple full of joy, prepared to shed that joy abroad over the entire world, and behold! the joy sank down to the very depths of her inmost being and so made room for sorrow, for the First of her Seven Dolours. The Virgin-Mother thenceforth was a broken-hearted Mother. Not that any sign appeared, not that she interrupted the jubilant song of the happy old man who wounded her so innocently, so divinely. No! Let joy be universal, and the sorrow all her own. None save Jesus knew her anguish, even St. Joseph was spared its

How truthfully, how tragically all this is set forth and shown in the Offices of the Church on the Feast of the Purification. The candles represent the Light of the World, and the priest who distributes them is clothed in violet, as though to represent her who first gave Jesus to the world. With us was to be all the light, the joy, the brightness of her Presentation of Jesus; and the sorrow she would keep unshared.

complete knowledge. Nor was Mary sad, nor did she repent her act. Simply, the joy had to make room for

the sorrow, and the result was—a Broken Heart.

So much be said—or rather so little—for the mystery of Mary's love: next we must consider the mystery of her humility. How could she need Purification, who was Immaculate Purity itself? She is like her Divine Son. He condescended to appear to be baptized, she condescended to appear to be purified. The Angels wondered at Both. God the Father magnified and glorified Both on each occasion—Jesus, by the light from heaven, the

Dove, and the Father's Voice; Mary, by the reverence and worship paid to her in the Temple by the prophesying Simeon and the saintly Anna.

Lastly I would ask, What does every joy and consolation tell us but that trials and crosses are at hand? It was ever thus with our Lord and His dearest Mother. After this Presentation, there came the Desert and Egypt. After the Baptism, there was the Fast of Forty Days. After the Transfiguration came the Passion. And this Feast warns ourselves of the coming Lent. Its light is given us to keep us glad and joyful throughout that weary, desolate season, to help us to maintain that look of content which our Lord prescribes. So are all the beautiful Feasts—as St. Philip teaches—sent to cheer us, and help our perseverance, to give us peace, and light, and rest in Jesus and Mary.

It is thus that here on earth the "night is illuminated like day," by the light of Mary's love. What will the light and glory be when night is past, when Pilgrimage is over, when the day dawns and "the shadows flee away"!





FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

for many reasons; yet there is not always complete sadness even when tears flow fast. Joys supervene, and for many life is like the Spring, an alternation of shower and sunshine. The same experience is to be met with in our spiritual life, and in this our highest and greatest joys "flow from Mary," who is Causa nostrae laetititae.

There is joy in receiving any wholly unexpected gift. Such was the joy of Mary in the grace of her Immaculate Conception.

There is a joy in being the brightness and consolation of beloved parents. And this joy also was felt by Mary in her childhood, when she found herself so dear and so delightful to Joachim and Anna.

There is a joy in being able and encouraged to give one's self to God, to become His minister or His handmaid. Such joy our Lady felt, when her devout parents presented her to God in the Temple of Jerusalem.

A holy matrimony too is deserving of festival and rejoicing, as Cana clearly shows. And such a joy entered into the life of Mary when her Espousals to St. Joseph took place.

There is a joy in receiving glad tidings, however startling to the listener. And this joy came into the heart of Mary at the Annunciation.

There is a joy in the exercise of benevolence, in the loving discharge of kind offices mutually dear to the recipient and the giver. Such was the joy of Mary in the Visitation, in the homage rendered so religiously by St. Elizabeth, in the happiness of the unborn Baptist at the coming of his unborn Saviour. The Magnificat sung by Mary is the perpetual music of that joy.

Our Lord has left recorded in the Gospel His notice of the joy felt by a mother on the birth of her babe. This joy to a divine degree was the melody in Mary's heart on Christmas night, when in response the Angelic Gloria rang through the heavens.

The Baptism which follows birth is another occasion for holy joy, in the sanctification and dedication of a child to its Creator. And this joy of happy Christian mothers was felt to a sublime degree by our Blessed Lady when she presented her Child Jesus in the Temple.

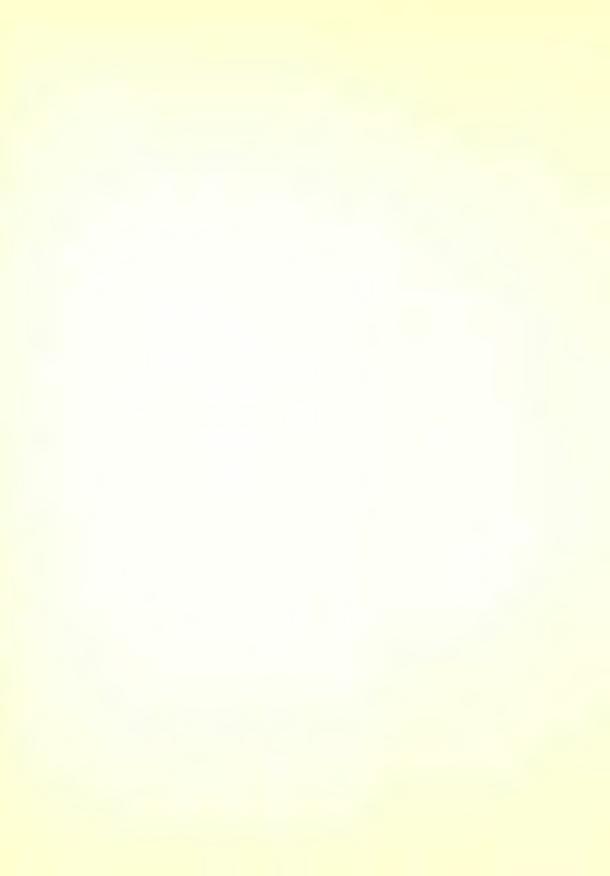
Lastly, there is a joy in finding what has been lost. This joy will be characterised by the cause of the loss, whether it was or was not through fault of ours, and it will be intensified by the value of what was lost, and our need of it, or our love for it. Our Lord in His Parables dwells on losses of each kind. And He has willed that the experience of His own Mother should be recorded in detail by His Evangelist, telling us plainly of the greatness of her sorrow, and leaving to us the pleasing duty of imagining and meditating on her joy. So are we brought to the Fifth Joyful Mystery, the Finding in the Temple.

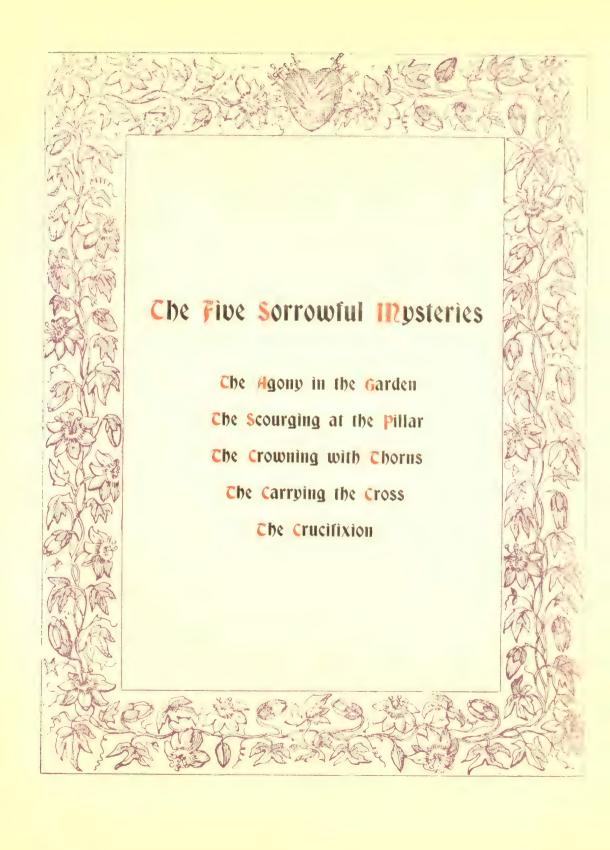
The Gospel narrative clearly explains that no sort of blame can be attached to the parents from whom the Holy Child so unexpectedly and secretly withdrew. We can easily gather from the account that Mary and Joseph

had fears for the safety of Him Whose life had been The attempted not many years before. Therefore it was in Finding anxiety, sorrow, and deepest distress that they hastened in the back to Jerusalem, which was no place in which a Divine Temple Child, who would perchance not defend Himself, could be left without protection. The words of the Mother reveal what relief it was to her and Joseph to find their Jesus safe. I cannot think it possible that they had attributed blame to themselves. Consciences so pure, so delicate as were theirs, must have testified that the reason of His absence lay not in any discontent or displeasure with themselves. Well did they know how tenderly He loved them. This made His absence so painful. It was indeed anguish to be suddenly deprived of His presence, the sound of His voice, the beauty and gracefulness of His fair features and attractive form. And the Mother's plaintive question may be taken not to imply reproach or even expostulation, but the relief it was to be freed from anxiety like theirs, the joy it was to find Him Whom they had so mysteriously lost, and "sought sorrowing."

Thus, in this strange fashion, is another human joy felt by Mary in common with us. She and St. Joseph, without having sinned or failed in the very smallest detail of their parental duty, are feeling the joy which we poor sinners feel who having lost our Jesus through our sins, who having played the prodigal so recklessly, still by God's mercy find Jesus through the grace of repentance which He bestows, and rejoice in our pardon while "there is joy before the Angels of God."

May Mary be the cause of this joy also to us poor sinners, now and at the hour of our death!









THE FIRST SORROWFUL MYSTERY THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

ANY words are not needed to describe any of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries. The Passion of our Lord is set forth in them, and with that Passion all devout souls are well acquainted; for it is the constant subject of Christian prayer, exhortation, meditation, and contemplation. These Five Mysteries have been explained by the Saints of the Church in their pious writings, and have furnished materials for the endless dissertations of others whose happiness it is to be, however unworthily, in the "Communion of the Saints." The design of the present work would not be carried out without some short account of each sad Mystery.

Our Lord led His disciples forth to the Garden of Gethsemani. There He made known to them the sorrow, the fear and sadness with which He allowed His soul to be oppressed. But He left to them and to ourselves "to attend and see" that in His Sacred Heart He brought away from the Coenaculum an anguish as keen as any that caused His Agony in the Garden. For He had announced to His Mother that the hour she so long dreaded had come at last; and He had bidden her farewell. To tell this to her was to inflict the wound of the Sword of Sorrow with His own hand,

^{*} They are minutely described in *The Blood of the Lamb*, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, a book published by Burns and Oates, Ltd., 1899.

and the grief of it was torture to His loving Heart. And from that hour His gentle Mother was involved in the coming Sacrifice, and He was tortured by the knowledge that she would suffer as He would suffer, without being like Him released by death.

The worst punishment of a criminal often is endured in the condemned cell rather than on the scaffold. Even guilt that is great and deserving the extreme penalty of the law does not always extinguish the natural feelings and affections of culprits; and the final interview with those who love them in spite of their unworthiness is often harder to endure than anything which follows. But the pathos of such partings is as nothing compared with the sorrow of our innocent Lord Jesus Christ about to be unjustly put to death, and compelled by filial piety and subjection to ask this final *Fiat* from His Mother. He went out from her into the darkness which concealed His distress, a distress which never quitted Him during the Three Hours of Agony.

Moreover, we cannot but think that Mary, though actually distant from the place of her Son's prolonged Prayer was present in spirit, and shared with Jesus in its sadness, its fears, its holy obedience. None can fathom the depths of knowledge she had acquired from the Prophecies, the Written Word, still less can any fathom the broken-heartedness caused by the communications of the Living Word, the revelations made with His own lips, on which she ever pondered, though what she considered filled her with sorrow, and reached "unto the division of the soul and spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). And none may dare to put limits to love like the love of the Son of God and the Mother of God. Time and space can be no barriers to a union so divine. We may be

sure that in spirit Mary shared the Prayer of Jesus, The Agony witnessed the Agony, and thus gained and maintained in the a place in the First Sorrowful Mystery of her Rosary. Garden

With the exception of the traitor, the whole company of the Apostles escorted their Master as far as the buildings of the olive farm of Gethsemani. There were very probably benches, or what might serve as seats; for our Lord in gentle kindness said to them: "Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray." Then, taking the three who had witnessed His Transfiguration of glory on Tabor and were also to witness His Transfiguration of sadness, He entered into the garden, and soon said to these also: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch." "And He was withdrawn from them a stone's cast, and kneeling down He prayed, saying: 'Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me. But yet not My will but Thine be done.' And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground" (St. Luke xxii.).

Thus did our Lord surrender His soul to deadly sorrow. He was of course master of His own feelings: it was only by His own free choice that this agony was endured. His soul was not to feel the slightest alleviation because of its possession of beatific vision. He would drink the chalice of suffering in obedience to His Father and in pity for us poor sinners, but the chalice of inebriating delight He would not taste, for that would have made pain and sorrow impossible. So the sorrow penetrated the substance of His soul, as fire penetrates the substance of iron and not the surface only.

For three long hours did our Lord pray, and in ever

increasing agony. He was the voluntary and accepted Victim, appointed to redeem the world by His Sufferings and Death. His Sacred Humanity was the most perfect Handiwork of the Holy Ghost; it was of faultless beauty, it possessed the fulness of life, and health, and strength; it was of exquisite refinement and sensitiveness: and the holy Will of that unblemished Victim was forcing every natural, shuddering instinct to be submissive, not to falter, to make no resistance, but, overcoming all repugnance, to drain to the dregs the chalice presented to Him by the Will of His Father.

Of all human sufferings mental anguish is the greatest and most intolerable. Even as hereafter the pain of sense in hell will be far less than the pain of loss, so is it here in our present life; the greatest of all suffering is felt when "the whole head is sick and the whole heart is sad," and no remedy is possible. Perhaps this may be one reason why our Blesssed Saviour before surrendering Himself into the hands of sinners, inflicted on Himself the worst suffering of His Passion, and voluntarily endured the Agony. For His life on earth, as for ours, there was a "season for sorrow;" and He chose to appoint it for the night before He suffered.

His sinless and most holy soul, interposing between sinners and the Divine Justice, showed itself ready to undergo all the punishments of sin which involved nothing incompatible with His Personal Infinite Holiness. Therefore He lay in the garden prostrate in His prolonged Agony, crushed and overwhelmed with feelings of fear, horror, defilement, shame, feelings which ought to follow the perpetration of sin, feelings which are the punishment inflicted by reason, whenever reason can prevail. Such feelings are separable from the guilt of sin,

and can be felt by the innocent, as is often the case when The Agony a whole innocent family is plunged into grief and anguish in the by the criminal conduct of one of its members. Add to Garden these, intense sadness, forgiving compassion and measureless love, and we thus are able to state the sorrow, the contrition, the disappointment which our Lord admitted into His Sacred Heart to atone for all the hard-heartedness, the senseless mirth and revolting laughter of irreligious worldlings who glory in their shame. That Jesus could bring Himself to suffer and die for such as these is an unfathomable mystery, but there is no mystery or wonder that the effort to do more than eat and drink with sinners, the resolve to expiate their sins of every description should cause this Agony and Sweat of Blood.

"And there appeared to Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him" (Luke xxii. 43). We are not told the name of this honoured Spirit, nor the manner of his ministration to our Lord. We may not, therefore, be positive in any opinion we are disposed to hold on these points, suggested by love rather than curiosity. Still, in fulfilment of the design of this work, we venture to suggest that this Angel was sent to our Lord at the prayer of His grief-stricken Mother, who was united to Him in prayer and knew in spirit what her Son was suffering. It may be pleaded in behalf of this view, that thus our Lady is, after a manner, given her place in another of the Mysteries of Her Rosary. The Queen of Angels well might ask this favour, and would be only using a mother's right in thus appealing to the Father in behalf of her self-immolating Son.

The sad words of Jesus, addressed to the apostles, had then but small effect. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Prayer would have prevented the

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triumph of the evil one, the flight, the desertion, the denial. Prayer is neglected by a youth: he sins: fear, horror, defilement and shame drive him into hopeless remorse. He has forfeited the esteem of others, disgraced his family, broken his mother's heart. In final impenitence, he kills himself—laqueo se suspendit. A girl, once innocent and pure, has failed to watch and pray, has grown weary of devotion: temptation assails her, and she yields: fear, horror, defilement and shame fill her with hopeless dismay: she forgets St. Mary Magdalen: and all ends with the shriek of despair as the cold, pitiless waters receive another yietim of sin and death.

Our Lord, Who has told us that "we ought always to pray and not to faint," will impart efficacy to the poor prayers which we utter so hesitatingly, and with so little earnestness, by uniting them with His own Prayer and Agony in the Garden.





THE SECOND SORROWFUL MYSTERY

THE SCOURGING

N the first part of the night, when Jesus had been seized at Gethsemani and led before the high priest and council, the Jews gave way in the house of Caiphas, as far as they dared,

to vindictive outrages. They blind-folded and buffeted Him, they defiled His bruised face with filthy spittle, and plucked spitefully at His comely hair and beard. Then for the rest of the night they imprisoned Him in the dungeon of the high priest's dwelling. At morning they brought Him forth, and led Him away as a malefactor to the Roman Governor.

Pontius Pilate questioned Jesus closely, and hesitated long before he could bring himself to condemn one whom he judged to be innocent, one whose stately demeanour so impressed him that he deemed Christ might indeed be the King of the Jews, if not One greater, as is implied by the question, "Whence art thou?" He decided at last so far to yield to the clamorous crowd as to scourge Jesus, in the cowardly hope that this would satisfy their enmity. "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him": an iniquitous proceeding against one whom he had as judge declared to have done no wrong.

In Pilate there was no animosity against the Christ Who stood before him, so strangely dignified and patient; there was a wish to befriend and protect Him from the fury of His enemies: yet to order the infliction of this

pain, this unmerited humiliation was a gross injustice, in which cruelty and contempt were united. Moreover, it was the beginning of the end; for scourging was with the Romans the usual preliminary of the capital punishment of criminals.

The scene of the Scourging was probably the courtvard between the palace of the governor and the barracks of the Roman garrison. There, no doubt, would be grouped our Lord's chief accusers, and a crowd of callous spectators. It is dreadful to think that the Mother of Jesus must have made her way thither accompanied by devout women who to the full extent of their powers and pity shared her anguish. Although at some distance, Our Lady was present, according to the stated conviction of many. The horror of it to Mary and her faithful, tenderhearted friends was that the Scourging of Jesus was of exceptional severity and barbarity. The subsequent detestable inhumanity of the Crowning with Thorns quite lends likelihood to the unusual, excessive brutality of the executioners who carried out the decree of Pilate. The two outrages are closely connected: and the inhumanity of the latter testifies to the probability of the former's almost incredible savageness. There is, we know, no obligation to admit the accuracy of even a St. Bridget in her private visions and revelations; but the more the narrative is studied the more we feel obliged to think that there is no exaggeration in what is said about the appalling numbers of the stripes by which we were healed.

Let no one, then, in fastidiousness shrink from meditating on that most cruel Flagellation. Inhumanity, contempt for one of a conquered and despised nation, the encouragements and bribes of Christ's gloating enemiesall urged the reckless soldiers to excesses, excess in using The fearful scourges of various sorts, from leather thongs and Scourging toughened rods to the dried sinews of animals! excess in the uncounted number of strokes, excess in the everincreasing mad ferocity by which the whole Sacred Body was reduced to one livid, bleeding wound.

The Mother of Jesus must have heard the sickening sound of the blows, may, alas! have seen the face of the Victim, lifted in adorable patience to the silent heavens. The Suffering of the Son, the Sorrow of the Mother in this Mystery are beyond all words: silent tears are more appropriate. Let us not withhold them.

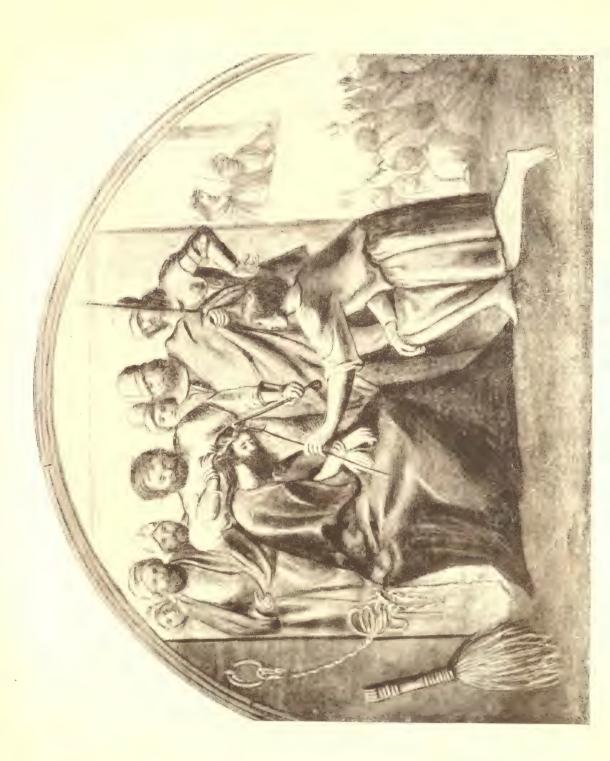
In our spiritual warfare we are cowardly; we desert so readily, and turn traitors; we so often irritate our God by our trepidity, our sloth, our self-indulgence, our want of perseverance. We thereby expose our souls to the danger of being punished hereafter with endless torment, with sharpest pains, with denial of sleep and rest, with cruel scourgings from demons whose slaves we make ourselves by sin. And Jesus suffered His atrocious Scourging in pity for us, and to avert from us here and hereafter the scourges of the Divine anger. Tantus labor non sit cassus!

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

to find that they had been unable to conquer His calm courage with the fearful Scourging. To have continued it any longer would have been to kill Him all too quickly: and so in fiendish malice they devised a fresh torture and a further outrage. His body was flayed, so they attacked His holy head, and accompanied the infliction of this exquisite suffering with savage imprecations and mockings which they hoped would yield them sport by rousing Him to impotent anger and resentment.

No wild fierce savage has ever invented or inflicted a more diabolical torture than this Crowning with Thorns at the hands of the soldiers of the Roman Empire. These ruffians had heard Christ spoken of as King of the Jews: they knew that He had not refused the title, while He gave its full and real significance to Pilate. If a king, and king of these despicable Jews, He should have a crown, a sceptre, a royal robe, and should hold a court. Thus they decided. As the sorry jest implied an insult to their people, the priests did not instigate this insolent iniquity; for, the Evangelist significantly says, "The soldiers indeed did this."

The soldiers, then, dragged Jesus from the pillar of the Scourging to a bench near the door of their guardroom. Over the bleeding shoulders they derisively cast





a tattered military cloak of purple, and then for crown The and sceptre they ran to the neighbouring palace garden. Crowning There they cut a wandlike reed for sceptre and some with Thorns prickly thorn branches to weave into a crown. With these trophies they hastened back, and protecting their hands with gauntlets, they made a rough helmet-shaped crown. They placed it on the unresisting head of Jesus, and pressed it into shape and made it fit, though its hard sharp points went through hair and skin and even penetrated the bone. They heeded not the blood that spurted on hands and arms and reddened the pavement beneath their feet. They placed the reed in His consenting grasp, but snatched it away at times to strike at the thorn-crowned head. They approached jeeringly, and bent their knees, mockingly uttering their scornful salutation, "Hail, King of the Jews."

The young are often cruel; but this cruelty of theirs for the most part comes from thoughtless impulses. But it cannot be pleaded that the cruelty of these Roman soldiers, if young they were, had any thoughtlessness about it. The whole account shows that theirs was a calculated and determined cruelty. Though even so, we may well believe that their Victim secretly pleaded for them, and that the pale, parched lips whispered, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Also, I think, we may refrain from saying that this wanton act was done in the presence of Our Lady. In spirit, no doubt, she was aware of it. But we may hope that the poor wretches had not the additional heartlessness of perpetrating their hideous barbarity in the presence of Christ's gentle Mother.

Yet for us there are many heart-rending considerations as to our share in the Mystery. For was it not to explate

our sinfulness in the permitted entrance into our memory and imagination of so many dangerous and wicked thoughts that our Saviour submitted to this pain? Proneness to evil from childhood has been the unhappy malady of our fallen nature. Hence our souls have been too often sullied and defiled by "light reading," by want of custody of the eyes, by conversations prompted by unlawful curiosity. We know it. Also we know that our Lord expiated such sinfulness by the pains of His thorn-crowned head. Ah, why do we relapse so frequently, and let spiritual death "enter at the window"? Why are we so unwilling to make, like holy Job, "a compact with our eyes"?

Holy Mary! Thy Divine Son retains no traces on His brow of that cruel Crown. But thine eyes have beheld it; and thine eyes of mercy now behold those for whose sake He wore it. Oh, pray that we may be blessedly "clean of heart," and so, when our exile ends, come to see God and thee, our beautiful Mother, in Paradise!





THE FOURTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY

THE CARRYING THE CROSS

His disciple unless he denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows Him. We then are called to walk after Jesus in the path He has trodden with bleeding feet, and to carry daily whatever cross He permits to be laid upon us, till we reach our Calvary, where the world is to be crucified to us and we are to be crucified to the world.

Vivid remembrance of the Wav of the Cross, meditation on all that our Lord endured as He went forth to Calvary, will provide us with motives to follow in His footsteps, and at last to die to the world and to self, for love of Him Who was led forth to die on Calvary for love of us. Stations of the Way of the Cross, erected in nearly every church, make all of us familiar with the events of that most sorrowful journey. We hear the deluded crowd at the bidding of the priests shouting for the release of the robber and the crucifixion of their King. We see the reluctant Pilate abandoning Jesus to their fury and vainly washing his hands, which he falsely said were innocent of the Blood of Christ. We see the wretches exultingly strip off the purple robe and replace His own garment, to make the disgrace and discredit more conspicuous, and then we behold the dear Lord open His wearv arms with love and welcome, and embrace the heavy cross, which He salutes with the kiss of His parched lips as it is laid on His weak but willing shoulder.

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Before long, we see Him fall beneath its weight, yet struggle to His feet and continue the death-journey. He reaches the spot where a sad Mother waits His coming. We behold her, after the exchange of one look of love and anguish, take a place in the mournful procession. We see that the unfeeling Centurion and the heartless guards charged with His crucifixion do not protect their Prisoner from the ill-usage and hustling of the rabble. And so two more falls take place, till the soldiers intervene, and force Simon of Cyrene to assist the thorncrowned Cross-bearer. We hear the kind, plaintive words which acknowledge so graciously the pity of the weeping women, and gently warn them to bewail the lot of themselves and their little ones rather than His We watch Him thankfully accepting the relief courageously offered by Veronica, yet declining the mingled wine that would have deadened pain. And so we follow Him as He staggers and struggles upward till the brow of Calvary is reached, and He, the true Isaac, in obedience to His Father's will can lay down the wooden altar of His Sacrifice in "the place called Golgatha."

Thus did our Blessed Lord carry His Cross. And thus has He a thousand times earned the right to require of us some courage, some patience, some resignation, even some love of the crosses we have to bear during life's pilgrimage. Our cross may be sickness, or poverty, or unkindness, and it may be one made up of all three together; we may, again, be calumniated, and persecuted for justice's sake, and subjected to every species of ignominy. Well! Let us rather rejoice than repine. Let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ our Leader. Let us be encouraged and comforted by the knowledge that His

Mother, and our Mother now, is not far off. If only we The have eyes to see, we shall see that the Companion of our Carrying pilgrimage, the Heavenly Stranger and Good Samaritan, the Cross Jesus Himself has actually hold of the cross we carry, and makes Himself a Simon of Cyrene to His poor disciples.

THE FIFTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY

THE CRUCIFIXION

HEN the soul sins, it commits an evil and dreadful act; for it tears itself away from God Who is its life, and forfeits His grace and friendship. Moreover, it draws upon itself a fearful and appropriate punishment, which is ever being inflicted from the beginning of the world to the end. Sin has brought death into the world—death and its pains, sorrows and agonies. To be present at the death of another is what hardly any can do unmoved. It is almost intolerable to watch even a little one of our race calling together its final powers when the soul passes, even when breathed forth in sinu matris, in the bosom of its mother. But it is simply appalling to contemplate the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus Christ our Lord and God. The mind is stunned, memory is confused, our eyes grow dim, and our weakness dares not contemplate the fearful spectacle. And vet we must, at least in spirit; we cannot keep away: what the sweet, gentle Mother of Jesus is able and resolved to do the most tender-hearted among us may not refuse. Ah! Mary was at hand, near enough to hear the awful sound, when the three rough iron nails were slowly driven through the quivering hands and feet, to fasten her Son to the Cross as it lay upon the ground. And then with horrified gaze she beheld Cross and hanging Victim appear in the air. None dared to bar her way, the Mater Dolorosa went forward,





and "stood by the Cross of Jesus." By every law we The are bound to follow: "See, Mary calls us to her side!" Crucifixion We must obey, though in our case, alas! we shall look upon Him Whom we pierced!

We ought then to endeavour to picture to ourselves the lamentable yet priceless Passion. Round the few soldiers who guard the Cross of Sacrifice surges a crowd of cruel, inhuman savages; these relentless enemies hurl insult and blasphemy at Him as He hangs above them. They try to wring from the Divine Victim some token of pain, some expression of anger. They do this in the sight and hearing of Mary His Mother. They are not deterred by that Mother's pathetic presence, nor by the majesty of her uncomplaining, heart-broken grief. If silent, it is only to gaze the more intently with Cain-like brows and "terrible eyes," watching and waiting to gloat over that saddest of all sad sights—His giving up the ghost.

Above the head of the Victim is fastened the Inscription, JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS. To be the King of the Jews was no crime. Pilate did not think so. On his part, it was a statement of who the Sufferer was. The Jews perceived this, and they suggested an alteration that would have made our Lord appear to be a criminal. Thus, from the first, "His own received Him not," neither at His Birth nor at His Death, which at last they traitorously compassed. The Living God is put to death by His rebellious creatures, the King of Israel by His revolted subjects. For our sake, He makes no resistance; He has emptied Himself of all glory; He asks for no legions of Angels to defend Him. Those legions are replaced by the maddened multitude around. They have yelled, "Crucify Him," till they prevailed:

and it is done. Haters of all that is good and pure and holy—have they brought hither Hell's inhabitants in the absence of all Good Angels? The presence of His Mother is ignored; no direct insult is offered, but she procures by that presence no better treatment for her Son. They deride His Kingship, they go to Pilate and make their protest, disputing vainly His right to the Title on the Cross. Yet, still in His eyes they are His people, and He pleads for them. "Forgive them, they know not what they do"!

They have mocked His majesty, and outraged the diadem of the King of Kings with that cruel Coronation of prickly Thorns.

Rejected King! They have snatched even the reed sceptre from Thy divine hand—that hand in which heaven and earth do not deserve to rest—and now, tortured and crushed, it closes convulsively and clenches the transfixing iron nail that pierces the holy palm!

Dethroned King! For palace and royal state they give Thee Golgotha and its gibbet!

Anointed King! With the foul spittle of their fiendish malice they have defiled Thy heavenly chrism, they have stripped off Thy garments to cover Thee with nakedness and confusion. Only the Red Blood gushes forth to hide the virginal flesh with the beautiful purple of Redemption!

At the Sixth hour they crucified Him, and from that hour till the Ninth every moment brings forth fresh horror. The sun refuses his light: the earth shudders and trembles at this worst crime of all. Loaded already with accumulated ages of countless sins—crying to God for another deluge to cleanse her anew from man's foulness, she reels and staggers, not knowing that the Precious Blood with

which Calvary is watered and soaked is her "laver of The salvation." The mountains heave, the veil of the Temple Crucifixion is rent, rocks are riven, the graves of the dead burst asunder—desecration, sacrilege, Deicicide arrest the order of the world, but the prayer of earth is heard and granted and a Deluge of Precious Blood takes away the sin of the world.

Beyond the black sky, how bright and calm are the heavens! But the Angelic hosts have hushed their songs, and their choir is deserted. They are here—"weeping bitterly" as the Scripture tells us. They may not interfere: not even he who comforted Jesus in the Agony of the Garden may draw nigh the dying Victim, The legions stand mute and sad in their serried ranks, and without one gleam of light, one warning cry, they wait to behold the Death of Him at whose Birth they so gloriously sang and rejoiced. "Accursed is he who hangs upon the tree." Because He takes on Himself the sins of the world, can His Father be so inexorable? There is no respite, there is no rescue. Only paleness, numbness, and quickened breathings. The gentle sighs are feeble, words fall falteringly from the dry, parched mouth—the breast heaves painfully, and the Heart throbs visibly in distress: it is breaking—the eyes, so full of death, are full of what is worse than death—they tell of that Heart's disappointment, they speak of the anguish of unrequited love and abandonment. In its grief and amazement at the pressure, that Heart seems to forget to Whom it belongs. In the abyss of misery and woe, it seems to forget its own divinity, and forces to the Victim's lips that appalling cry and lamentation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Why? O Saviour! loosen Thy saving hold, cast away

from that loving Heart, from that sheltering Breast the unclean wretch Thou art rescuing from Sin and Hell—and then the Divine Anger will cease, Thine Agony will end. But man's doom will be—eternal woe!

He is faithful and true: He gives up His honour, beauty, strength, Blood, Mother, Life, all, and clings to those for whom He dies, as though He were crucified to them by His love! The storm's fury, the lightning, the lash, the Curse, all fall on Him. But "by His stripes we are healed," by His death we live, and our life contents Him and repays Him! Slow as is His dying, I believe He would prolong it, were there still left any more pain and sorrow to endure.

With holiest obedience, He bends His head to the Father, and declares "It is finished:" with tenderest love He inclines His poor face towards His Mother in gentlest farewell: with divine dignity He beckons with that bending of His head, and permits the approach of death. The last Blood-drops ooze from the cold Body, He commends His Spirit into the Hands of His Father, ashen whiteness spreads among the ghastly wounds, His gentle breathings cease—it is like death, but Mary knows it is not death—He lays down His life freely, He Himself bids His Soul depart—"with a loud cry" He gives up the ghost

Jesus is dead—the Friend, the Brother, the Master, the Good Shepherd, the High Priest, the Lover of our souls! O lament and mourn as for the death of the only son! O Jesus! art Thou dead?

Look round. Deserted sanctuary, denuded altar, empty tabernacle—He *is* dead, and we have not even the Body of the Lord!

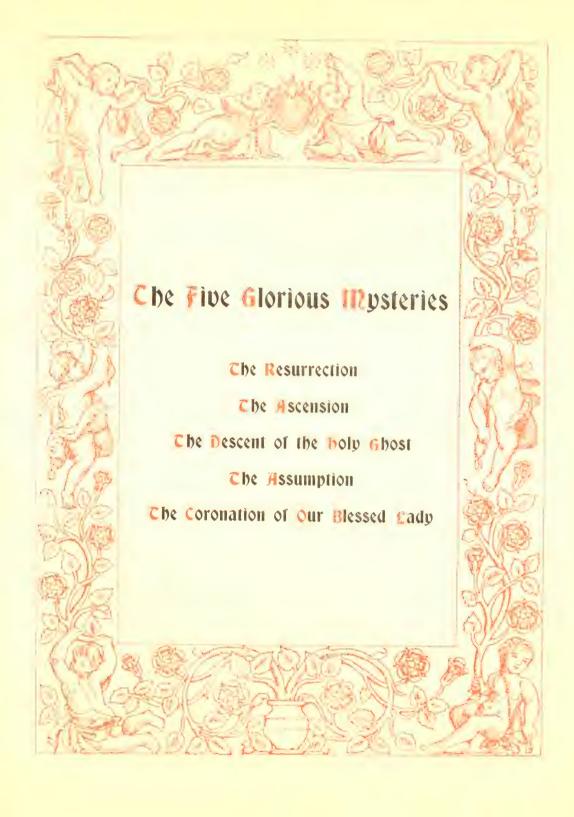
O Jesus! while we lament Thy death, one gleam of

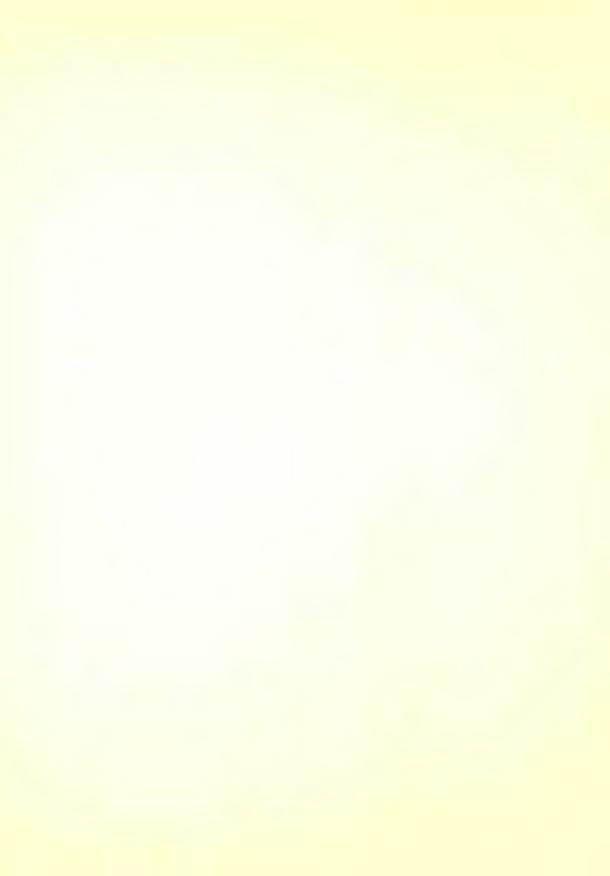
comfort shines in the utter gloom—the thought that we The too shall die, shall know by experience somewhat of that Crucifixion which Thou hast endured for us. Thou hast, Divine Being! lived on earth for us and with us, and for us and with us Thou hast died!—And yet how little likeness will there be between our deaths and Thine!—Thou hast suffered that we may have sweetness and the assuagement of our pains, the tears and sympathy of kindred, the light of the blest Candle, the protection of the Holy Water, the Last Sacraments of our dear Mother, Holy Church, and her Commendation of our departing soul. Gentle hands will wipe away the dews of death from our cold brows, brave voices will speak Thy Name, and Thy Mother's Name, and Joseph's in our ears, and our chilled fingers will be comforted with the feel of Thy Indulgenced Crucifix!

By Thine own dereliction we implore Thee not to forsake us in that hour! Thine has been the hard and bitter death, may ours be happy and easy—because, O dearest Lord! we do desire to be dissolved, and be with Thee, our Jesus and our All.

Tantus labor non sit cassus!









FIRST GLORIOUS MYSTERY

THE RESURRECTION

RTISTS are allowed great freedom in their treatment of Christian subjects. It is necessary; for genius would languish if too much checked and thwarted. It is evident that occasionally they err in departing from the truth of the history which they represent: but on the other side it may be granted that their originality discovers and points out to us some new and unperceived feature in a Mystery with which all are familiar.

In representing the Resurrection, our painters have used much freedom in depicting as simultaneous things which happened in succession. Thus we often see on the same canvas an earthquake's effects, eager Angels rolling the great stone away from the Sepulchre, terrified, half-dead guards, alarmed women drawing near, and above all, rising from the Tomb, bright and glorious, the Redeemer, in triumph, in splendour, His raiment white as snow, yea, whiter because enhanced by the ruby radiance of His crimson Wounds. But if the Resurrection of Christ had been in this wise we should have found the accounts of subsequent Apparitions different from those given by the Evangelists. We should have to prepare ourselves to witness the King's entrance into the Holy City-more triumphant than the Procession of Palms-to assist at the submission of Annas and Caiphas, to behold Pilate humbling himself before the

God he had so outraged by his cruel cowardice. When St. Sebastian, after his first martyrdom, appeared like one risen, and rebuked Diocletian, he was exercising a right conceded by Christ to His soldiers. But He Himself celebrated His own victory with no public pomp and triumph. Angels in heaven might sing at His Birth, but at His Resurrection neither Hosanna nor Alleluia rent the air. It was not to be: He would not put a single enemy to shame and confusion.

In quiet, in complete absence of all visible display, without sound of trumpet or song of Angel, the Conqueror came forth from the Sepulchre, not even displacing the stone that served for door. Later that same morning, the very sun rose with more splendour than visibly surrounded his Maker's Rising. And why? Because the Risen Jesus is Jesus—"Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, the same for ever"-Whose "Kingdom is not of this world" -Who says "I seek not My own glory." All the pomp and pageant of such a Resurrection as many are led to imagine would have been His own glory, and He would have none of it until those He loved were able to share it with Him. Also, it may well be that-like the infinite majesty of His Godhead—the hard-won exaltation and majesty of His Sacred Humanity was too great and calm to notice the vicinity of evil, to rebuke His puny persecutors. I however prefer to think it was rather because He still sought not His own glory, that in His victory He was meek and gentle, in His triumph merciful—in His exaltation humble of heart, ever saying: "They know not what they do."

It is not recorded that any human eye beheld our Lord come forth from the sealed and guarded Sepulchre. No human eye now beholds Him enter or quit His

Sacramental shroud and altar-sepulchre. Before sunrise, The Mary Magdalen and her devout companions hastened Resurrection thither, as all the Evangelists declare, but they found the Sepulchre already empty. They knew not where to go to find Him Whom they sought sorrowing. Some returned, one stayed there weeping.

With us, it has long been something more than a mere opinion that our Lord as soon as He quitted the Tomb went straight to His Mother, and was with her till after sunrise. Counting on the nobility, the absolute perfection of our Saviour in every attribute of His human nature as of His divine, we should expect Him to be found where the Wise Men found Him—"With Mary His Mother." True it is that a visit to His Mother is not recorded, while Apparitions to others are duly mentioned. But there is evident reason for naming those whose testimony as witnesses to the Resurrection would be required, and for not alluding to evidence which would be neither offered nor accepted. Great numbers of doctors and theologians* hold that Jesus appeared first to His Mother. They were priests: and, though deficient in many things, most priests are like their Divine Master in this at least—that they are good sons to their mothers: and every priest would, I think, feel that this Apparition to Mary is to be taken for granted, as a matter of course, as what every human being under the circumstances would naturally do. In fact, since Peter and Thomas and other individuals were not forgotten, it seems impossible to admit that there was an omission of this solemn duty by the most faultless and perfect of Sons, this well-merited tribute to His bravest, sweetest, most generous, most faithful Mother.

^{*} St. Gregory, St. Anselm, St. Thomas of Villanova, and others.

Return then in spirit to Maria Desolata, with whom we watch and mourn on each Good Friday night. "Her tears are on her cheeks"—there is no need to ask the Mater Dolorosa: "Mulier, quid ploras?" Enough for us, conscious as we are of our own share in causing her sorrow and this broken-hearted grief, to watch in sad silence and wait, wait till He the Comforter shall come. Here is the likeliest, fittest, holiest place for Him to re-appear. Hither an instinctive feeling tells us He will surely hasten, as we ourselves would hasten at our first release from the thraldom of death, in the first exercise of life and liberty. Here, then, we will watch and wait

She has wept for us in the night--"lifted up her hands for the life of her little children:" now that the hour approaches, and the dawn is near, the prayer of her heart passes into another entreaty—"O Thou that dwellest in the gardens," sleeping in Thy rock-hewn tomb, "the friends harken, make me hear Thy voice." And ere the light of dawn has dispelled night's darkness, we see the tears on the pale, uplifted cheeks of the Mourner glitter with the brightness of an approaching glory, her face grow radiant with joy and gladness. . . . The voice of her Beloved is heard: "Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone." "Noli flere—Surrexi et adhuc tecum sum—Ecce Filius tuus: Weep not—I am risen and still am with thee —Behold thy Son!" The Mother springs to Him in His risen glory, she is folded in His arms-the Woman is clothed with the Sun! Oh, with what blissful content she receives back the kisses she gave so sadly to the cold, dead Face on Friday! But now it is all past and gone. Never again is He to be the Man of



Sorrows, and her Dolours and Desolation are ended. The The Sword-pierced Heart is pressed to the Sacred Heart, Resurrection and from the fair Wound in the Open Side-—from the Saviour's Fountain—all His divine joy and depth of love come gushing forth in a tumultuous overflow of happiness, and she is released for ever from the pains of her Compassion.

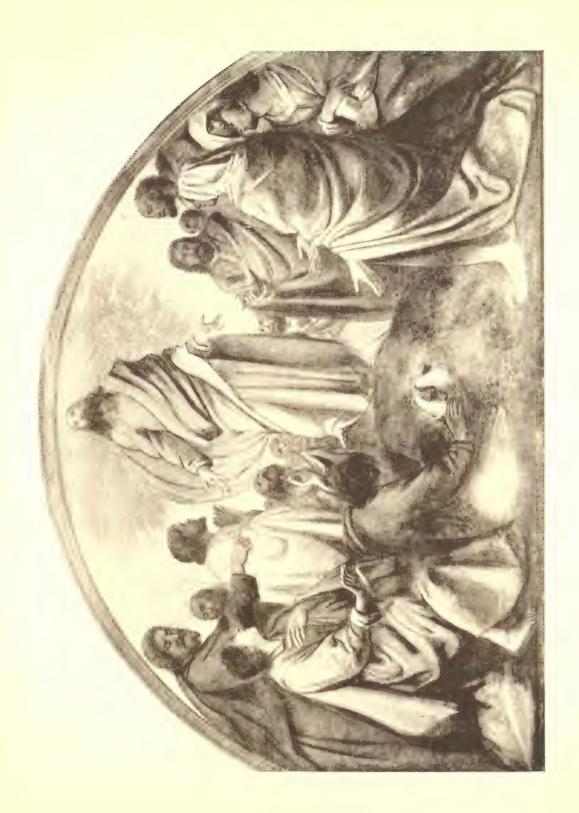
Regina Cœli, laetare! Thou art the first, the very first to see, and handle, and kiss those beautiful Lovetokens in His Hands, and Feet, and Side—Laetare! Alleluia.

SECOND GLORIOUS MYSTERY

THE ASCENSION

T would scarcely be a rash supposition, were we to think that the exiled Eve, in answer to her children's cry, would point out to them in what direction lav the Paradise from which she and they were banished. That mother surrounded with those children, gazing wistfully on some distant horizon where perchance still gleamed a warning light from the Cherub's sword of fire, forms a picture sad and pathetic, and not unsuited to this vale of tears. And in contrast, let me speak of another picture, which concerns us more closely, and which may help this day's meditation-the picture of another Mother surrounded with her children, standing on Mount Olivet and gazing into the heavens still aglow with the glory of her Ascended Jesus. "I will not leave you orphans" He had said to them; and they feel that He keeps His word while Mary remains in their midst. And to us He also repeats "I will not leave you orphans;" and though we are exilesfor "while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord"—Mary calls us to her side, this time not to mourn with her, but to watch with one whose face is "lit with smiles."

What was it, then, that Mary beheld this day? She saw the Lord leaving the earth which He had watered with His Blood, the city He had wept over, the home she had given Him, the friends and disciples He had





drawn to Him, and--strangest separation of all—herself. The She beheld Him slowly rise into the air above their heads, Ascension looking down and blessing them even as He rose. She watched till the white cloud received Him out of their sight. Better than any, she knew Whom that bright cloud represented—the same Cloud had overshadowed her with its snowy purity in the mystery of the Incarnation, had re-appeared at Tabor—it was the Sign of the Eternal Father to Whom her Jesus was returning. It sufficed. He had left her: she would not think of seeking now. He was with the Father: it was enough.

The eye of her body could see no further, but the sight of her spirit came to its assistance, and obeyed the behest of her love. So did her spirit rejoice anew in God her Saviour. She beheld Him enter heaven, traverse with wounded Feet its golden pavement, pass through the serried ranks of adoring Angels, and, in the highest of highest, sit at the right hand of the Father Almighty.

And probably too in that moment was vouchsafed to Mary one of those entrancing glimpses and visions which she surely above all others deserved. For one brief moment she enjoyed the Beatific Vision, gazed upon the Blessed Trinity, and thus tasted the chalice of inebriating delight at last held to the lips of Jesus, lips that had prayed, and pardoned, and had kissed the guilty as well as herself, His sweetest Mother—lips that had been parched with cruel thirst, lips that had called out: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." She beheld Him pervaded soul and body with the long withheld glory and joys of heaven: she exulted to see her God and Saviour, the Blessed Fruit of her womb, resting in the Bosom of the Father.

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What part have we in the Ascension? Well, we have Mary, who is herself a part of it, a piece of heaven more heavenly than those white-robed Angels standing by. She is the link between earth and heaven, left behind by Jesus to be the solace and stay of our hearts. We have Jesus; for He is our Head. We have then a real participation in the Ascension. Our conversation is there, our hearts are there; for Jesus is the Treasure of our hearts; our Food is brought thence; for thence comes the Blessed Sacrament.

Sursum corda! "We have not here a permanent city, we seek one that is to come." Let us not forget that we are children of a Saint who in his youth prayed on the mountains where he could see the sky, and in his old age would ascend to the roof of the Oratory to behold the heaven which held Jesus his Love, and Mary his Life, his Sweetness, and his Hope. Sursum corda!





THIRD GLORIOUS MYSTERY

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

APPY and most favoured were the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord in having with them the Mother of Jesus during the days of preparation for the Coming of the Paraclete! Her presence was in itself, their best, their most consolatory proven

was in itself their best, their most consolatory prayer. The assistance which Mary gave them in preparation for the Descent of the Holy Ghost was alone sufficient to win her the title of Auxilium Christianorum. They found it easy to obey their Divine Master, and restrain themselves from trouble and sadness of heart because of His departure, when they realised that His Mother was content to remain with them and be the Consoler of the Afflicted. Moreover, Mary could tell them so much concerning the Holy Spirit; and probably answered many a devout and reverent question about His coming upon herself at Nazareth, in the midnight Mystery of the Incarnation.

But how little could they, how little can we understand the interior preparation made in the depths of her heart by Mary herself for this last Descent of her Divine Spouse! What did she now expect to receive from her God? Already He had adorned her with graces so great and so numerous that it would seem as though nothing in the Divine Treasury could have been kept back for this final Visit from on high. However, we may think this at least in perfect safety. The visit would be most pleasing to the Lord God, more pleasing than any of

those earliest visits to an earth which had not forfeited His blessing, to a Paradise as yet unharmed by sin. The Heart of Mary was pre-eminently the Paradise of God, and His descent would be to behold its fairness, to rejoice in the fragrance of its flowers, in the sweetness of its fruits. The Holy Spirit would descend and give token of His divine complacency in Mary, who had always corresponded promptly, fully, unwaveringly to all His inspirations at every crisis of her eventful life, not hesitating, not withholding her last Fiat Mihi, her consent to remain longer on earth when her Jesus went from her into the highest heavens.

But was there no other grace left, which the Divine Giver of all heavenly gifts might bring from above on this day of wonders, and bestow on His Faithful Spouse? Who will blame us, if we venture to say that such a grace there was, ready for its meek and most blessed recipient? The Apostles had been instructed to remain in prayer and preparation, till they should be endued with power from on high in order that they might form and found the Church of Christ. With them waited the Mother of Jesus, and waited that she also might be endowed with a new and especial grace, by which she might fulfil and discharge those maternal duties towards the Church of Jesus in its infancy which she had accepted and undertaken at the foot of the Cross. In detachment, courage, patience, love and gentleness, tender care of the Mystical Body—all the maternal offices, which began so beautifully at Bethlehem, were to be renewed and exercised in behalf of the Infant Church of Christ born at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. These maternal ministrations should never cease till the earthly life of the Church should pass away into everlasting glory. So that all now done in heaven by the Queen of Heaven in behalf of the Church The Descent on earth is but the outflow and continuation of the of the stupendous grace received by Mary on this Day of Holy Ghost Pentecost.

Three and thirty years ago, the Angel at Nazareth declared her full of grace—what has made room in her Heart for this vast addition? Surely the combined action of ceaseless love and the mighty surgings of the Seven Sorrows have enlarged that Broken Heart, enabling it to receive this especial gift, when the Tongues of Fire shine on the heads of all!

Suddenly the sound of His Coming is heard. The impetuous rush of those mighty pinions like a great wind shakes the whole house in which they are gathered. And then those wings are folded: for He is come to abide with Mary and the Church: and in silence and in golden light from the lambent heavenly flames, each soul is indelibly sealed and confirmed by the actual presence and immediate operation of God the Holy Ghost.

What the Apostles thenceforth were their Acts proclaim. What Mary thenceforth became to the Church is described by the Holy Ghost in the inspired Book of Wisdom: "From the beginning, and before the world was I created, and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be, and in the holy dwelling-place I have ministered before Him. And so was I established in Sion, and in the holy City likewise I rested, and my power was in Jerusalem. And I took root in an honourable people, and in the portion of my God His inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of Saints."

FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

THE ASSUMPTION

Often, in silence of the night, the holy, the young and innocent have been thus consoled in sickness, have awoke to listen, to speak of it, and die. Saint Philip often heard angelic harmonies, and other Saints have received the same favour on many a Feast of the Church. The Shepherds of Juda could repeat the very words of an angelic hymn. And we ourselves may be said so far to participate in the grace, that, on this glorious Feast of the Assumption, we "think Faber we hear," and almost can hear, the singing of Angels.

When throughout the realms of heaven the stars shone forth, "all the sons of God shouted and made joyful melody"—when the Light of Light lit up the dim cave of Bethlehem, they sang their Gloria overhead: and so to-day, when the beautiful Star of the Morn rises and mounts so triumphantly on high, they hasten to welcome her, to escort her into her kingdom, and again that Angelic Salutation greets her—Ave MARIA, Gloria Plena!

The prelude to that heavenly harmony is earth's sweetest hymn. From the Death of Mary to her Assumption, contemplation wafts the soul, entranced and rapt as by a strain of exquisite music, in its beginning soft and plaintive, then swelling and ascending grandly to a burst of triumphant gladness. Yes, this beautiful day





has had a beautiful night out of which it dawned—its The night was the reposeful darkness of the Sleep or Death Assumption of our Blessed Lady.

And of that death who has told us? No Evangelist, no Apostle. Yet he who declared the Generation and Birth of the Eternal Son could well have told us of the Mother's Death. And he who so lovingly records the first days of Mary with the Child could easily have left us some picture, some narrative of her last days. But our Lady would not allow it. Not only in life but even in death, she shunned all mention and praise: and doubtless she desired to die the death of the Just, to die as her holy Spouse Joseph had died-an unrecorded death of sweetness and rapture in the arms of their Jesus. Tradition has, however, spoken the more, has tenderly gathered and preserved many moving details of Mary's death. It tells how the secret of her going got whispered abroad—how there was no look of age or sickness on the Sinless, but perhaps some look of weariness in waiting. some look of pining, such as is seen on the faces of mothers who long for the return of an absent son. And those who watched her make a farewell visit to the Holy Places saw a mysterious likeness in the Mother to the face of Jesus carrying the Cross. No wonder we are told that a fore-shadowing of sorrow cast gloom throughout the land, and that even irrational creatures meekly gathered on her pathway to receive the blessing of our gentle Mother, while the birds of the air grew silent, because the Dove was about to wing her way to rest.

From the faithful hands of the Beloved Disciple she receives the Holy Viaticum, for Jesus is her Resurrection and her Life. Her couch is already arranged by the devout women, so that later it may serve without further

handling for her modest bier. From distant lands the Apostles assemble and stand around their Queen. They are in the Upper Chamber, but it is not Pentecost: they hear no coming of a mighty wind, but songs of approaching angels, and suddenly in the still and quiet evening Jesus appears amidst His own. It is but for an instant—it is only that His Mother's dying eyes may once more behold Him ere they sleep the sleep of death. He gently bends to her outstretched arms, He kisses her parted lips. In the exquisite sweetness of that embrace, her faithful Heart forgets to beat, her soul escapes to lean on her Beloved, to rest on the Sacred Heart. In filial duty the hand of Jesus is lightly laid on those peaceful eyelids. Hushed is her Heart. That Temple of the Holy Ghost, that Ivory Home of the Blessed Trinity is closed, closed by the Key of David.

And we? We must wait, and watch, not without tears of tenderest devotion. Alone, unseen of us, like the high priest in the Holy of Holies, our Mother's spirit is absent, far from us is adoring and worshipping in self-sacrifice the majesty of the Eternal, the Immortal. Therefore do we see our Mother's face so majestic, pale and white, white with the whiteness of the Blessed Sacrament—we behold the likeness in death as in life between the Son and Mother, between the face crowned with thorns and the face wreathed with flowers—the same paleness, the same features, the same sweet smile—all that may remind us of His dying love without recalling our cruel sins.

How silently have passed these three last days of mystic number! It is as though the Church were heeding the whispered wishes of her Spouse: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awake my Beloved until she please."



AL NARI EF

For the comfort of St. Thomas, it is said, and for the The consolation of all generations who call Mary Blessed, on Assumption the third day the Twelve Apostles opened her sepulchre. They found it full of living, flowering lilies, but the Lily they had laid there was gone. At once they understood. The Maiden-Mother had slept, and all unseen and unheard as when He Himself arose, the Lord had come, and ere the dawn of the third day was ended, He had called her from that sleep, declaring that His divine decree of death was never made for her His Queen, for her with whose life He Himself had lived—He had taken her away to bloom for ever in the land of heaven and fill it with fragrance. So felt the Apostles, so they delivered their discovery to the Church, who has held fast to the dear Tradition.

Each one can imagine the glorious Assumption—the marshalling of heavenly hosts, the stately setting forth on this Procession of victory, the departure of the triumphant pageant. Each in spirit watches Mary ascending from the desert, leaning on her Beloved, His left hand beneath His Mother's head, His right caressing her. Each one can hear her repeating, as she goes up the everlasting hills, the Magnificat she first sang on the mountains of Judea.

How gracious is the divine greeting of God! The paternal tenderness of the Father, the filial pride of the Word, the exultation and jubilee of her Spouse the Holy Ghost! He that created her now rests finally, supremely in her tabernacle, and her Jesus leads her with infinite honour to the throne beside His own. The Mother of Grace at last is the Mother of Glory, the dearest, grandest object of divine complacency, Queen of Heaven, enthroned at the King's right hand—His

Mother who stood by His Cross on Calvary and who shall now for ever and ever be close to Him in bliss. How glorious her court and kingdom! Seraphim and cherubim are there, but must gaze upwards to behold their Oueen on her lofty throne: they are as the mountains of Libanus, she as the spreading cedar which gives them softest shade. Angels and archangels are there, and the ever-increasing assembly of the Saints, beautiful as the hills of Sion, countless as the sands of Cades, fair as the choicest flowers, but compared with Mary they are as the wild flower of the field beside the rose-plant of Jericho, as the cypress of the hill-side beside the palm tree of the desert. In an honourable people she takes root, and Heaven becomes the home, the house of Mary. There, in the fulness of glory shall she exercise her prerogatives and her maternal ministrations, while reposing in the brightest portion of God's inheritance given to her for her abode—that "Better Part" which shall never be taken awav.

And thus we are led to recognise the appropriateness of the Gospel chosen for this Feast, the description of the House at Bethany. Towards the end, the house of Martha was the only earthly home of Jesus and Mary, it was Their resting place, Their refuge. And the description of it suggests to us what manner of home is that of our Mother in Heaven. Home must be the right word; for wherever a mother dwells, wherever her influence has been or is exercised upon her children—there and only there is a home. Heaven is the home of Mary, for she has chosen it for herself and for us her children, and in glory lives there her twofold life. Like Martha, she is solicitous and yet not anxious in her love of us, like Mary she rests and listens to her Jesus, yet

not at His feet, rather at the King's right hand. Heaven The is thus shown to us as our home, and all that is meant Assumption by the dear word. And we feel this the more, because she, the Mother of fair love, there lives and loves, not in the intolerable brightness and flashing splendours of incorporeal soul and spirit, but in the sweet soft aspect of the Mary we have always known, in the maternal tenderness we have always understood, in the deep human affections and feelings of that sword-pierced Heart of flesh.

A thousand times let us bless God for our dear Lady's Assumption, because thus He has magnified His own great glory, He has exalted hers, and has made her more than ever our life, our sweetness, and our hope; for she attracts and draws us lovingly to heaven, and we have the confidence to feel that at our appointed time, on the very threshold of eternity, our souls need not faint or falter, because while angels sing around us we shall enter heaven as though we were going home, and straightway seek our Mother's Most Pure Heart.

FIFTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

THE CORONATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

CCORDING to the most beautiful of the Apostolical Traditions, which it would be rash to doubt, irreverent to deny, our Blessed Lady, as stated in the preceding chapter,

was assumed into heaven.

No fruit from Eden's Tree of Life had been eaten by Mary, but the sweet Fruit of her womb, which had hung above her from the beautiful Tree planted on Calvary, secretly returned from heaven. He into whose hands she had commended her spirit brought that spirit back to its mortal home to make that home immortal.

"Arise, O Lord, Thou and the Ark of Thy sanctification." This lifeless form is that Ark, it has contained the Divine Manna, the Living Bread come down from heaven. It is the Virgin earth which budded and brought forth the Saviour: it may not return to the dust of the earth which has been cursed. The holy body of Mary is to share in the honours of her soul. From the lonely tomb it calls: "Lord, my sister hath left me here alone, speak therefore that she aid me." Between the sinless soul and the sinless body there is no discord to keep them apart: let the sister soul return to her sister body, and end the trance of love and death.

The sister comes to fetch the gentle pleader away to "the better part." In the peace and freshness of a pearly dawn, when all is calm as on the first Easter Day,





with the strength and light of an immortal substance The spontaneously exercising its glorious powers—the exultant Coronation spirit of Mary speeds swiftly through heaven's portals to of Our our earth, and enters her sepulchre. Thousands of angels attend their Queen, and the tomb is covered and enveloped in a blaze of glory. The raiment of this world, like the grave-garment of Jesus, is laid aside, exchanged for heavenly regalia and the dazzling cloth of gold, the robe of resplendent sunshine. The Queen comes forth, clad in the unfading vesture of immortality. Then appears "the Great Sign"—the purity of her Perpetual Virginity and the dignity of her Divine Maternity shine forth, and, blended in one effulgence, transfigure the Most Blessed amongst women and amongst the Blest with snowy whiteness and light like that of Tabor.

The Assumption is Mary's Resurrection of the Body: and her soul reanimates, awakes to life, to bliss, that sinless undefiled body which death has only touched, and this with her own consent, and with due reverence and homage.

The Immortality of Life Everlasting is imparted to the Risen Virgin-Mother, to the blessed womb in which the Word was conceived by the Holy Ghost, to the blessed breasts which nourished and pillowed the Babe of Bethlehem, to the Sword-pierced Heart, wherein "All these things were kept and pondered," to the eyes of the weeping widowed Mother who heard no Noli Flere—eyes that now are to weep no more, nor gaze wistfully and sadly on grief and suffering, but are to look ever bright and happy in their gentle sweetness, to gladden her Son, and again be gladdened by His joy. What a blessed sight this Vision at the Tomb of Mary! Yea, and blessed too are they who have not seen and have believed.

The fair form puts on yet greater beauty, though always she had been "all fair." Retaining all the perfections which nature and grace have alike contributed, it is clothed with immortality, arrayed in the heavenly attributes of glory, steeped in dazzling light as if clothed with the sun, gifted with powers equal to those of the swift-winged Angels. So is Mary fit and able, and, oh! how ready! to rise on high and pass away. Leaning on her Beloved, for love and not for need, she mounts upwards to her celestial Kingdom amid acclaiming multitudes of Angels. There is no effort, no timidity, no fear. It is as easy, as natural to her to ascend as it was to tread the floor of the home at Nazareth when she would pass from one room to the next. But it is more than easy: the very act is one of magnificent delight. Earth has been exile, the tomb captivity; and this is freedom, liberty, whose only limit is the Divine Immensity. A captured eagle when released and set free darts away to the distant skies, and as it mounts further and further from earth so increases its joy, its exultation, and the strength with which it proudly dashes those noble pinions into the pure, cold ether. Ah, with what intensity of rapture that creature of God thrills in those regained realms of liberty! Thus, thus is it with Mary. She uses the gifts of her glorified body, she quits the earth, and speeds away in the golden track of her Ascended Jesus. Grandly, joyously, she spreads the wings of her desire, and the Heavenly Dove arrives at the gates of the Heavenly City. "The King of ages, the Immortal and Invisible" bids her welcome. In the light of glory the Mother beholds the Divine Person, the Divine Nature of her Son. She adores Him as of old, and as of old hesitates not to fling herself into His open arms. In



these Heavens Divine Love has dwelt eternally, and The eternal has been the embrace of Father, Son, and Holy Coronation Ghost. Here angelic beings have long felt the sweetness of Our of celestial friendships. But now the Lord hath created Blessed Lady a new thing in the true Garden of delights, in the Paradise of bliss—human love is seen in its holiest and happiest perfection, a "Woman compasses a Man," motherly arms are flung round the dear neck of Jesus, loving lips receive the kisses of His mouth. Bright, beautiful, and still unchanged, human, affectionate, tender and womanhearted, Mary, as in the earthly life of old, seeks by the same smiles, the same gestures, the same caresses, to express the same true, unextinguished love of her happy Heart. And Jesus? His left hand sustains her head, His right embraces her. Thus, leaning on her Beloved, she passes through the gold-paved streets of Sion. All is new to her, yet nothing is strange or startling: it is not so trying as the going up the steps of the Temple, to be presented in her childhood to the Lord. The creatures of God are free and at ease there only where He means them to dwell—the birds in air, the fish in streams and the waters of the deep, and the Bodies of the Blest in the Mansions of our Father Who is in heaven.

Yet what a Procession to the Throne of God! What an exaltation of the Handmaid of the Lord! As a bishop, at his enthronement in his cathedral, intones the TE DEUM, so Mary in her Coronation receives from the hand of Jesus "her radiant crown," raises her melodious voice in the Sanctuary of God, and chants again, in the midst of spell-bound angels, her inspiring MAGNIFICAT.

The Assumption and the Coronation belong to the history of the Church in Heaven rather than to the history of the Church on earth. Apostolic Tradition has given

us the Feast of the Assumption. And it is easy and delightful on that day, to obey the summons of the Church, her Sursum corda! The Coronation has no festival in the Liturgy. Perhaps we are to look on it as included in the Assumption, as the glorious, final ceremony of that triumphant Celebration. But in our Rosary it has its distinctive, prominent place, it is the fifth and final Mystery.

Never can we be sufficiently grateful for the definite minute teachings of the Church about Life Everlasting, about the heavenly kingdom in the other world. True it is that she does not explain to our understanding the essence of that Life. She tells us with St. Paul that it is inconceivable: but she assures us of a future blissful existence, if we be among the "Blessed of My Father." The spirits of the just fly to the bosom of the Father of Spirits. Like the living creatures that roam in the deep, they plunge and sink down into the ocean of Divine Goodness, into the fountain of Divine Joy, or rise to soar aloft in the vast realms of Divine Immensity, where the white wings of flocks of Angels gleam in the sunlight, and winnow celestial music to accompany their songs. Of this blissful existence in beatitude we can hardly venture to speak. Where heaven itself is we know not. We may not make assertions; they could only be rash. But we do know that such a locality exists, that the Sacred Humanity of Jesus is the same as it was in the days of His mortal life, that it retains the Wounds which identify it so appealingly, that its natural perfection continues, to be enhanced by the manifestation of the glory seen first by a few only, and henceforth to be seen by all. In His Father's House Jesus has His royal throne, and near that throne is that of His Blessed Mother. The human element is not kept at The a distance. Such as Jesus and Mary were upon this our Coronation earth such are They now in heaven—"yesterday, to-day, of Our and the same for ever." Jesus still says: "It is I, be Blessed Lady not afraid." Mary greets each child of hers brought by Guardian Angel to her throne with the sweetest welcome, saying: "Behold thy Mother."

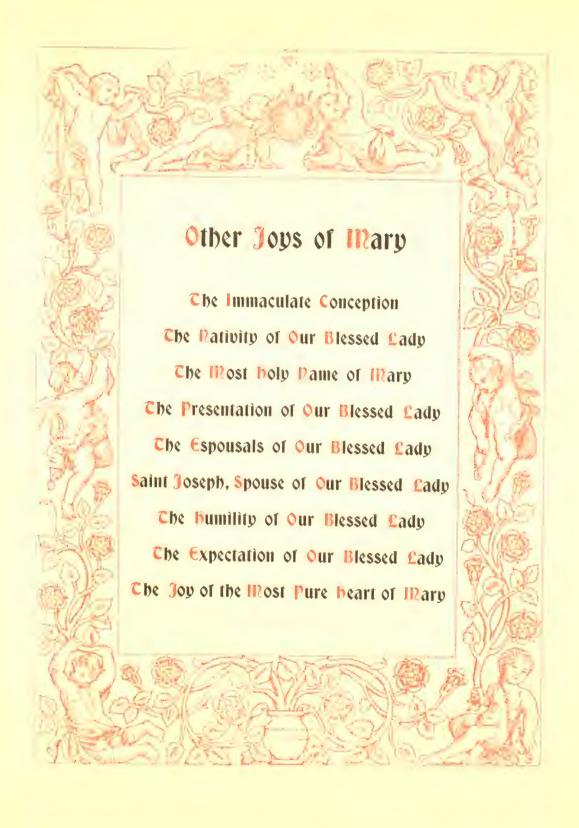
O Divine Offspring, sons of God, children of Mary! Do we not "almost seem to hear faint fragments of that song," that Magnificat of the Queen of Heaven? She sings in the Home which she prays you may yourselves reach. The voice is sweet, and is the voice of your fond, holy, loving Mother, "the Mother of fair love." Child! though the next step takes you close to the throne of God, advance! She who at His right hand awaits you is—your Mother.

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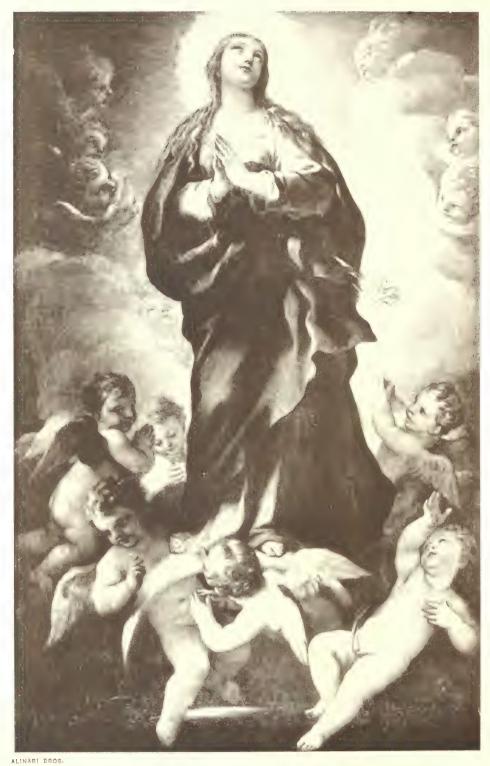
ROSA MYSTICA PART II.











PRÆCINXIT ME VIRTUTE, ET POSUIT IMMACULATAM VIAM MEAM

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

THE EARLIEST JOY OF MARY

UBILEMUS! Gaudeamus! It now is fifty years

In Fest. Dec. 8.

ago that PIUS IX. of holy memory gloriously and infallibly defined the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and imposed it as a Doctrine of Faith to be believed without doubting by all the bishops, priests, and people of the Catholic Church. The powers of darkness were already gathering against the Church, their vaporous gloom was spreading through the world, fatal to many, oppressive to all: but the gates of hell were not to prevail; the powers of evil were suddenly confronted by a fearless Pope, the Flock was protected by its Divinely appointed Shepherd, and the whole Church of Christ exulted when the silver voice of PIUS, like a clarion of victory, sounded forth in St. Peter's the saving truth of the Immaculate Conception. I call it a saving truth, for the Doctrine then defined is the remedy for the spiritual malady of these modern times, when "the whole head is sick" with proud error, with arrogant ignorance; men denying the existence of Sin, either original or actual, freethinkers, misbelievers, disbelievers ridiculing religionists, rejecting Revelation, denying the first principles of Reason, strutting about with a ludicrous air of superiority, and treating remonstrants with not a little scorn and dislike. Truly, the number of fools is infinite, and lunatic asylums are too few!

For all this misery we have to thank the Protestant Reformation. This rebellion against the authority of the Church in matters of faith and obedience led in time to the French Revolution's impieties and atheism, and to the diabolical excesses of cruelty which history records. The spirit of the world still remains very much that of the French atheistic philosophers. Although maddened mobs do not surge and dance as heretofore, driven by unclean spirits to perpetrate appalling crimes in the name of Liberty, and in the foul ritual of the worship of Reason, the principles with which this abominable conduct accorded still survive, disguised in the guarded phraseology of moderation and decorum. In consequence we have in England a "happy family" of Isms-Protestantism, Rationalism, Socialism, Anarchism, Materialism, Secularism, Journalism—all claiming to be lawful, respectable, and entitled to a full and equal enjoyment of the benefits of the British Constitution! All are partizans of Progress, all make common cause in the glorification of "Humanity."

All of them feel and display more or less hostility to the Church, because she tried to check the initial revolt, rebuked their pride, and by anticipation condemned the lofty pretensions of the present days. The Church tells them that man has not in himself, as they assert, through the natural powers which he possesses or will soon possess under the auspices of Progress, an inexhaustible supply of all that is needed for the welfare of the human race. She says to man: "Thou sayest I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and blind, and poor and naked." The Council of Trent declared the Fall of man, the forfeiture of grace, the sinfulness of

every descendant of Adam, with One Solitary Exception. The Mary, the predestined Mother of God, was that exception: Immaculate and perhaps—because even here the exception proves the Conception rule—this may account for some of the strange, angry hatred of our Blessed Lady which has been exhibited by post-Tridentine heretics. On our side we can but repeat the language and praises of the Church: "Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hereses tu sola interemisti in universo mundo." Undoubtedly the words of the Council show that the Church considered the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin to be a certain truth, and if it was not as yet a defined doctrine, it was a doctrine which no one was willing to oppose. "This Holy Synod, however, declares that it is not its intention to include in this decree, which treats of original sin, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God." Three hundred years later, PIUS IX. by his Infallible Definition places in perpetuity on the head of that Blessed Virgin her glorious Crown of the Immaculate Conception, and throughout the whole world the Faithful applaud and rejoice.

While the wise and learned of this world offer their unsafe and unsatisfactory solutions of the problem of evil which confronts us, the Church gives a reasonable explanation of our calamitous condition, and offers us the remedies which God Himself gave her for our cure. One set of self-appointed teachers tells mankind that, ignoble and simian as is man's origin, he is ever improving, developing, and nearing perfection: and this flatters the pride of man, and makes him boastful and presumptuous. Another set takes an opposite line, tells man that he is a failure throughout, that he has, like the brute beast, only a short existence, which is not

prolonged beyond this life, and that he has nothing to do in his depair but eat and drink and die. The Church explains the destiny, the Fall, the Redemption of man: she does not tell us everything, but she tells us enough to keep us alike from presumption and despair. than this. To cheer and console us in these our evil days, she has been inspired by the Holy Ghost to make known to us authoritatively that the ruin of the Fall was not entire and universal—that ONE was preserved, that while all others sinned in Adam, Mary did not sin, was not hurt, nor included in the act of attainder which has involved every other human creature. For ages this was a secret of God, known by His friends, guessed at by multitudes of believers in all ages, and finally, to the glory of God, the honour of His Mother, the confusion of the seed of the Serpent, and the consolation of the clients of Mary, at last fully revealed and dogmatically defined. So that henceforth this doctrine may be no more called in question than the doctrines explicitly stated in the Apostles' Creed. Were any rash enough to dispute and deny the fact, they would thereby make shipwreck of their faith; but it is not forbidden to discuss in humility the Divine Decrees and Dealings of God in granting to His chosen Mother this joyful Privilege; and perchance we may while doing this find our hearts grow hot with the love of God, and the love of Mary, even as the disciples felt on the road to Emmaus, when Jesus Himself explained the Scriptures to them, and invited them to judge whether Christ ought not to have suffered, and so enter into His glory.

One of God's greatest servants, who was also one of the world's closest reasoners and deepest thinkers—St. Augustine has said: "Whatever occurs to you in

the truth of reason as that which should be done, The know that God, Who is the Giver of all good things, Immaculate has done it." These pregnant words of the Saint Conception suggest the grounds of an inquiry, and the spirit of that inquiry, into the nature and reasons for this Privilege of the Immaculate Conception accorded by God to His Mother.

"Whatever should be done, know that God has done it." The words remind us of yet weightier words, inspired by the Holy Ghost, which likewise suggest and sanction St. Augustine's proposed method of studying and explaining Divine Mysteries. "It was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens." Such is the description of the Redeemer given to us by St. Paul (Heb. vii. 26). It is fitting that Christ should be holy, and because it should be done God has done it: and Jesus is holy, undefiled, and made higher than the heavens. To His human nature all possible holiness must be imparted; for infinite and uncreated holiness is inseparable from the Divine Person to Whom that nature belongs for ever. And therefore it is fitting that the Mother of Christ should also be holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. It is fitting that the Fountain should be pure from which flows the pure and purifying Stream, that the Precious Blood, Which cleanseth from all sin, should be holy and undefiled in Its origin, that the virginal blood from which came the Saving Blood should be untainted by sin's corruption. The truth of right reason says this should be done: know that God has done it.

·But in the truth of reason we see yet another

fitness that the Conception of the Redeemer's Mother should be Immaculate; besides Revelation, besides the Definition of the Church, the voice of our own reason exclaims: "Know that God has done it." Mary is associated with Jesus in the Redemption of mankind. She, likewise, should be undefiled, separated from sinners, because she is to assist our High Priest in His sacrifice for sin. Sweetly and strongly Divine Providence ordered that Christ should not be alone in the Atonement, as Adam was not alone in the Fault and Fall. Remember it is "the sin of the world" which the Lamb of God takes away, it is for Original Sin first that the sacrifice is offered on the Cross beneath which the Mother of Jesus stands. For the confusion of the enemy, for the teaching and consolation of mankind, for the glory of Jesus and the honour of His Mother, the instruments and means of man's ruin are copied in those used by God in man's redemption. See how completely the analogy is preserved throughout. The evil angel, suggesting sin to the first woman, gives place to Gabriel sent on embassy to the Virgin of Nazareth. The first woman is replaced by her who compensated for Eve's words and conduct by her Fiat Mihi, by her consent to become the Mother of Him Who was "to save His people from their sin." The tree, laden with forbidden fruit, was planted in Paradise, and Eve stood beneath, and gathered that fair fruit; the Tree of the Cross is planted upon Calvary, on it hangs the Fruit of Mary's womb, she standing beneath and making restitution for the theft of Eve. Each woman shares alike in this, that neither was the cause of sin or of atonement. Adam was the cause of the Fall: he was the head of the human

family, the responsible authority; and it was only The when he, with full deliberation, yielded to temptation, Immaculate and made Eve's fault his own by sharing it, that the Conception deed changed its character, and became, instead of Eve's limited act of personal disobedience, the First Man's sin, the death-introducing calamity of the human race. But Eve contributed to the Fall by her personal influence, her persuasions; and similarly Mary contributed to the Redemption by her acquiescence, her consent, and — as far as creature could — her compassionate presence at the foot of the Cross. The one sole sufficient Cause of our Salvation is Jesus, Iesus only. He is the One Mediator: in His Name, in His alone is Redemption, Redemption for all, even for Mary herself, even for the holy, innocent, undefiled Assistant at His Sacrifice.

What then is precisely the difference between the Immaculate and all other mortals? This: she is preserved from sin, we are rescued; she is without spot or stain, we are cleansed; the Precious Blood purchased her immunity from all sin original and actual; it protected her, for us it obtains pardon, and heals our wounds. "The most Holy Virgin Mary, by reason of the foreseen merits of the Redeemer Jesus Christ, never was made subject to original sin, and was therefore redeemed with a more sublime redemption."

The position of Mary is, then, exceptional? Yes. And this is fitting. Every law can have its exception. The Divine Lawgiver, most of all, and above all, is free, supremely free. God can and does make exceptions. What we call miracles are exceptions to His laws of nature made by Himself—exceptions granted for better ends than the ends of nature's laws; for

miracles not only display the power and goodness of the Creator, but make manifest grace and holiness—gifts of the supernatural life, of the higher order. Is Mary a miracle in this her Immaculate Conception? Indeed, indeed she is . . . "Chief Miracle of God's compassion, Choice Mirror of His burning holiness." She is an Exception, a Miracle. Has any other woman God for her Child? Is any other woman at once Virgin and Mother? Has any other woman been asked by God to co-operate in mankind's redemption?

Moreover, does not the Immaculate Conception of Mary also redound to the glory of the Redeemer of the World? For, were she not Immaculate, His Redemption would be without its fairest crown. He who prevents disease is a better physician than he who cures. He who buys off the liability is a greater benefactor and redeemer than he who discharges the debt after it has been incurred. "This should be done; know that God has done it." Since Jesus can thus redeem, know that this grace has been given to His Mother. If Mary had not this privilege, then should we poor creatures have devised for the Son of God a most beautiful act which it is fitting He should have done, and which, notwithstanding, would have been left undone. He who has taught the Church to love His Mother would have us know that He bestowed upon her this grace, so needful to His glory, in recompense for all she gives to Him in the generosity and worship of her maternal 1000

In the first moment of her existence Mary might have been greeted with the AVE, GRATIA PLENA! Then already was she dear to God, and yielded to Him a glory, a joy greater than that which all other creatures

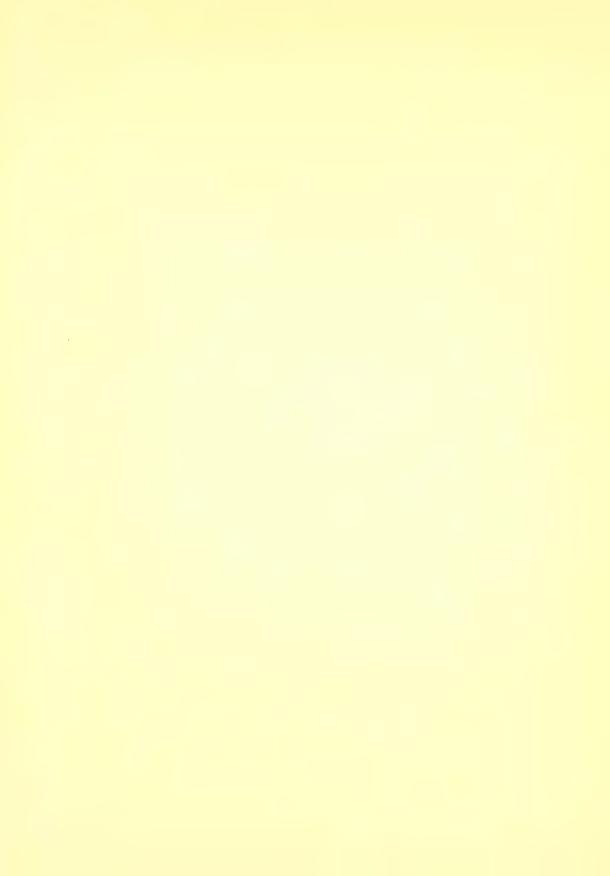
united can offer. All creation that remains good is dear The to God: He blessed the primeval world. But Scripture Immaculate tells us that, before God made the heavens and earth Conception and waters, One was with Him in His thoughts and purposes, One who delighted Him Ludens coram Eo—a recreation to Him who is His own rest. This one was the predestined Immaculate Mother of His Son Who would be Incarnate. It was in order to provide an earthly and heavenly home and kingdom for this Son and this Mother that God in the beginning created heaven and earth.

Dear to God is the human race, though fallen, disgraced, and condemned to toil and labour. The Creator compassionates those whose punishment is to till an earth which He has cursed and covered with thorns and thistles. He aids their work, and calls them from it to Himself for rest. But men are dearer to God in their higher state, in their possession of His grace, than in all their material progress, history, scientific studies and pursuits. The closer the tie of grace is drawn, the more beloved is man. God had rather be known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than as He Who Is; rather as the God of David than the God of Abraham, and before all and above all as the God of Mary; for in her more completely and fully than in all others is Jesus Christ, the Grace of God. So is Mary predicted in the beginning of the book; she is the Promised. Victorious Woman who shall crush the Serpent's head. Our First Parents had surrendered their free will to that Serpent's hypnotic suggestion; but the will of Mary never was identified with theirs, never interpretatively consented to the Original Sin. Her free will

was ever beautiful and perfect: God could trust it: it was not for test or trial that He asked her consent to be His Mother.

Ave, Full of Grace! "Joy of earth and heaven!" If the joy of Angels over sinners doing penance is so great and far-reaching, then assuredly the Joy of the Sinless One must overflow, and make earth and heaven glad. In many and marvellous ways our Lady gives us a share in that Joy. The mere wearing of a medal of the Immaculate Conception acts like a celestial charm.

Ah, Sinless One! so compassionate towards sinners. Undefiled! so attractive to the guilt-stained soul. Unfallen! so merciful and gentle to the fallen. Thou art indeed the Cause of our Joy; now, almost the only Joy left us in this wicked age! Were they ours to give, all the brightness and beauty of earth should be brought "Come, and be crowned from Lebanon!" The snow wreaths on its brow are not, O Mary! so fair, so pure as thy crown of Singular Grace. Thine should be, were they but ours to give, the beauty of the roseate dawn, the glory of the golden sunset, the fragrance of all fair flowers, the joyful melody of all God's Angels singing amid the music of the starry spheres. Thine should be the purity of the gentle moon, the effulgence of the dazzling sun. Though earth were left bleak and desolate, we "would forfeit all for thee", and still our all would be as nothing compared with the grace and glory given thee by thy Jesus, thy Redeemer, the glorious grace of—The IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!





GAUDIUM ANNUNHAVIT UNIVERSO MUNDO

THE NATIVITY OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Sept. 8.

N human life the day of birth with its anniversary counts always as an important event: in a family, it is the chief day on which especial marks of affection and esteem are given; in a nation, those who rule and those who are conspicuous for heroism and greatness are honoured and greeted upon this day as it recurs.

We might have thought that the Church would have disapproved of this practice, would have told her children that the day of baptism, not of birth, was the proper day of rejoicing. Yet she has not said this. She knows that God loves the world—the earth He created and blessed, the inhabitants with whom He peoples it: she knows that the new-born, naked little savage has the Creator for its Father in heaven, and the lifting up of its little hands may be counted as an unconscious thanksgiving for the gift of life. The Church herself, however, has another day on which to celebrate the better birth of her children in the better life of bliss—it is on their entrance into the land of the living that she rejoices in their nativity, and calls on us to keep their birthday, and share her joy in the glory of the Saints. Only in the case of Three does she celebrate the birthday of a natural life, because the supernatural life of grace accompanied its entrance into our world. These days are—the Birthday of Our

Saviour, Fountain of all grace, the Birthday of His Baptist, sanctified by grace in his mother's womb before he saw the light, and this present Birthday of Mary, "full of grace."

Reflect that we celebrate the Nativity of our dear and Blessed Lady, because she came to us this day bringing with her into the world more treasures of holiness and justice than have been acquired by the countless Saints of God in the whole course of their meritorious lives of virtue, suffering and work. No baptismal waters could be ever needed to cleanse that soul from original sin macula non est in te! She was the green pure Olive on which the Heavenly Dove could descend without encountering the deluge of sin that defiled the earth: she was the chosen branch which He made His own, which promised a renewal of the face of the earth. She was the Lily among thorns, whose fragrance and whiteness should attract the Lamb of God, the Lamb Who feeds among lilies, and Who found on our earth one Lily fairer than the fairest in the land of Heaven. And so, without delay, without waiting for Mary's entrance into Heaven, the Church bids us rejoice this day, because the fair Child of Joachim and Anna is born, while the Angels unseen and unheard by us give glory and thanks to God.

There is a full narrative of the Birth of Christ given by His Evangelists, and they equally describe that of His Precursor; it seems, however, as though no especial importance was attached to the Birth of Our Blessed Lady: for there is no mention of it in the Holy Scriptures. True it is that there is no direct mention of this most happy event, but there is an obvious explanation of the omission. The birth and

genealogy of Mary are so closely bound up with that The Nativity of Christ that the same words suffice for both. Thus of Our in this day's Gospel we come at last to the words: Blessed Lady "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born JESUS, WHO IS CALLED CHRIST." The two Births have no meaning apart from one another, and that meaning is fully and inclusively declared in the Birth at Bethlehem. Therefore so soon as Mary is mentioned in the genealogy it is declared that she gave birth to Jesus, all else being set aside. True it is that for a moment she appears to us as the Dawn of Salvation; but the pearly softness of the beautiful Aurora soon glows with the glory and full splendour of the Day of Salvation; we gaze upon the silver Star of the morn; but as we look the full brightness and effulgence of the Sun of Justice envelopes and absorbs the radiance of the Star—and thus are the two lives blended, and when we celebrate our dear and Blessed Lady's Birthday, we hasten to proclaim her Divine Maternity, and in joy and gratitude recall the great events of the Magnificent Life of Marv.

Yet this day we praise and bless Our Lady not so much as subjects keeping the Birthday of their Sovereign, the Queen of Heaven and earth, but as children greeting their tender, their most loving and most beloved Mother. For so it is. "Monstra te esse Matrem" has been our prayer—a prayer that has always been answered. It is her glory that we call her Mother of God; it is our glory that we call her Mother of mankind. St. John represented each one of us at the foot of the Cross, and as proxy for each of us heard Jesus say: Behold thy Mother. And, as we well know, Our Lady also consented, when Jesus said to her: Behold thy Son. Has she not shown herself the best, the

М

kindest of mothers? In affliction she has been our consolation, in sickness she has been our health, in weakness she has been our strength, in temptation she has been our shield, in sin she has been our refuge. Never have we gone to Mary without obtaining relief. She has prayed for us, wept for us, suffered for us as only mothers can. With Jesus and through Jesus has she helped and protected us. In our behalf she has sacrificed not only herself but Him also, her best-beloved, her Child-God. Ah, when she stood before Simeon, she interposed not only her own sorrow-pierced Heart, but the very Babe in all His beauty and holiness that she was clasping to that Heart; and she did this to shield and screen the poor, cowering, sinful wretch They both so strangely cared for from the anger of God and His Divine Justice! Knowing that our sins are committed against her Child, when she flees with Him into Egypt, it is not only for His sake but for ours, to prevent us from being Herods in our malice. If she endures the dolour of the Three Days' Loss, it is not solely for the increase of her own vast merits, but that she may the more speedily hasten to help those who lose Jesus through their most grievous fault: she learning by experience how sad it is to be without Jesus, to lose Him even blamelessly, innocently. Yes, Mary has given herself and her Jesus to us; because, like God, she has so loved the world, and has without reserve and without reluctance become our Life, our Sweetness, and our Hope; in other words—our Mother.

Surround her altar, bring to her presents—presents that devout love prompts. There let happy children sing and sing fearlessly: Infant Mary, Joy of earth, We with all this world of mirth, Light-hearted and

joy-laden, Greet the morning of thy Birth, Little The Nativity Maiden.

And we others, also lovingly, will say: Pray for Blessed Lady us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF MARY

Infra Oct. Nat. B.M.V.

N the year 1683, on September 12, within the Octave of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the Turks sustained a crushing defeat outside the walls of Vienna. The Christian hero who went to Austria's assistance was the King of Poland, the valiant John Sobieski. And he went at the instance of Pope Innocent XI. On the morning of the day of battle, King John himself served the Mass of the Papal Envoy, he bestowed the honour of knighthood on his son Prince James, and then he threw himself at the head of his little army on the beleaguering camp of the Infidel. He gained a complete victory, which he and his troops attributed to the intercession of our Lady rather than to their own valour. With the details of the battle we need not occupy ourselves: but one thing well deserves to be recorded. King John wrote to his Queen that her son Prince James, the boy-knight of fourteen, had ridden and fought beside his father for fourteen hours, while his brother Prince Alexander, a child of eight, headed a charge of his hussar regiment across a wide moat into the enemy's camp. The victory of Sobieski saved Christendom from the Turks, and in gratitude to God and the Mother of God the Pope appointed the Sunday within the Octave of our Lady's Nativity to be kept as the Feast of the most Holy Name of Mary.





But it must not be thought that it was only then The Most that devotion to the Name of Mary began. All genera- Holy Name tions call her Blessed: from the mother of the Baptist, of Mary from the unnamed woman in the crowd who lifted her pious voice, all have honoured the Name of Christ's Mother. Such praise and renown as were given to Judith in the days of old have been gladly and gratefully given in every age to the Handmaid of the Lord. At the end of the eighth century St. Methodius exclaims: Thy Name, O Mother of God! is filled to overflowing with divine blessings and graces. St. Jerome declares, in accord with Tradition, that an Angel of the Lord made known to Anna that God Himself had chosen the name of Mary for her daughter. St. John Chrysostom did not hesitate to write: We have our spiritual incantations, the Name of Mary itself. This overpowers the infernal serpent, and casts him back into the fires whence he comes, and heals his bite. Let us then fortify ourselves with it as with a wall.

If the evil one assails us, we call upon the Angels of Mary to come, "in the Queen's Name" to our assistance. That Name is steeped with the sweetness of our Saviour's Name, it reflects the gleaming sanctity of His. Living and dying we call upon that blessed Name. Years ago, one of our young fathers came suddenly to death, through hæmoptysis. Well do I remember the poor white lips through which the blood was gushing, and how this disciple of Grignon de Montfort and Father Faber even then kept to his fixed purpose, and with his last breath called out aloud the most Holy Name of Mary!

Each year two days are kept by us as festivals, with more or less of joy—our Birthday and the Feast

of the Saint whose name was given to us in Baptism as our Patron. The Birthday revives feelings of fellowship and love for friends and relatives on earth; the Saint's day lifts up our heart in the Communion of the Saints to humble and happy fellowship with our heavenly Namesake and Patron. The custom is consecrated by that Love which is the fulfilment of the law. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And in the language of love, the names by which we call one another take a prominent place: in nothing is love more sweetly shown than in the selection and bestowal of names. Little ones are named after those who are dear to their parents. Nay, the friend, the lover, are not content with names given by others: they claim the privilege of changing a name, or giving a new name, one that they alone may use; because it implies a knowledge, an intimacy unshared by others. Hence come those many names of endearment which often sound foolish and unmeaning, but only to those who do not love.

Moreover, it can be pleaded for these practices of human affection that they have this ennobling feature—they are founded on the customs of Divine love itself. The Second Commandment is like unto the First, and human love is like Divine love. And so it may be claimed that God Himself has given us the example of this way of showing love. That He "calleth creatures by name" is given in Scripture as a proof of His love. So likewise He changes names, and assigns to His dearest and chosen friends new and more excellent names, to denote the honour and love in which He holds them. Not to speak of the "Name above every name" given by Him to His well-beloved

Son, think of the meaning and importance attached to The Most the names of Abraham, St. John Baptist, and St. Peter. Holy Name Think also of the blissful time when "perfect love will of Mary cast out fear," and each of the Blest and Beloved of God shall receive "a New Name," "A Name written, which no man knoweth but himself."

Thus, it is because we greatly love our Blessed Mother that her Name is so dear to us, so full of sweetest meanings. Whether we hold that it means literally Star of the Sea, Illuminatrix, Lady, Chief with God, or God of my blood, we discover theotokos contained in all, and wonder not at the joy of Gabriel, when he felt permitted to say: Ne timeas, MARIA! We piously believe that—like St. John's, and with greater reason—it was especially revealed to her parents. We exult when it first appears in the Holy Gospels-Et Nomen Virginis MARIA. We rejoice to be there made blissfully acquainted, at one and the same embassy from heaven, with the Name of God the Father, with Our Lord's own Name, with the Name of God the Holy Ghost, and with the Name of the Virgin Mary. And therefore, as we show our worship of God by pronouncing His Name with reverence and never taking it in vain, as at the Name of Jesus every head shall bow, so at the Name of Mary we offer the homage of that due and appropriate veneration and love to which she is entitled by the will of the King Who delights to honour His Mother, by the acclamations of our own hearts, which she has won with many an act of maternal tenderness.

Most dear to us, full of comfort and consolation is this beautiful Name of "the Mother of fair love." Its meanings are like the fragrant flowers in a choice

bouquet; the mind ponders them, the heart draws from them sweetness and food for its affections. And doubtless the Church by instituting the Feast of the Name intends to encourage us to do this more and more, to look out perpetually for the shining of the Star of the Sea, to invoke constantly the most holy Name of Marv. Were religion merely a conscientious discharge of duty, such a Feast as this would not exist. Were religion fear and awe alone, we should not have it: for then we should have had no Jesus, and, of course, no Mary. But, Blessed be God! there are now no longer only starlit interviews for the few in vales of Mambre, no longer clouds and thunder and lightning on mountains like Sinai, no longer appalling though gracious Divine visitations—these are ended with the past, and in place of them we have Bethlehem, the Child and His Mother, the Man-God caressing little ones, Calvary instead of Sinai. Many and many a festival would be missing had not Jesus so lovingly come to Mary, been born of her for us men and our salvation, wept for us, and finally died for us out of the love He felt for our poor souls. If we take no interest in the feasts and memorials of these things, we may be sure that we do not love Jesus and Mary. It is a bad sign, said our St. Philip, if a man feels no especial devotion on the Feasts of the Church. Love is mindful, grateful, meditates devoutly on each Mystery of mercy brought before us by the Church. Love will try to celebrate them with some offering or service however small. Love is tender, kind, gentle, thoughtful, diligent, yet doing everything with exquisite delicacy in imitation of Him Who washed His disciples' feet, Who prepared food for them with His own hands on the shore of the sea of Tiberias.

Need I say that the danger of departing from the The Most grace of God—to so many a real danger—is much Holy Name averted by the recurrence of Feasts like the Feast of of Mary the Name of Mary, Feasts of especial love? They protect us from the pressure of the world around us, a world that is jealous of God, of Jesus and Mary; from the slothfulness of our lower nature which shrinks from the sacrifices of love, which shudders when it hears: They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its concupiscences. These minor Feasts break the monotony of many lives, blameless but unharassed by temptation, and liable to settle down to a dead level of inactivity, indolence, and sleep which allows the oil to be exhausted and the lamp to go out.

But the Feast itself tells us that we may hope for some increase of our love of God. Look, then, at the Sacred Heart. We may find it hard to realize that God is Love, that God in heaven, blissful Being of pure spirit, can care for our human love, take note of our dispositions and affections. We cannot think this of the Son of Mary. He at least knows by experience, by anticipated sorrow in the days of His suffering, what disappointment and anguish the unkindness of our unloving lives has caused Him to feel. With all our faults we are loved by Him, with all His goodness He is scarcely loved at all by us. Let us only love our God a little more, we should be at once rewarded—by the sweetness and rapture which we should feel in saying: Blessed be the Name of Jesus! Blessed be the Name of Mary!

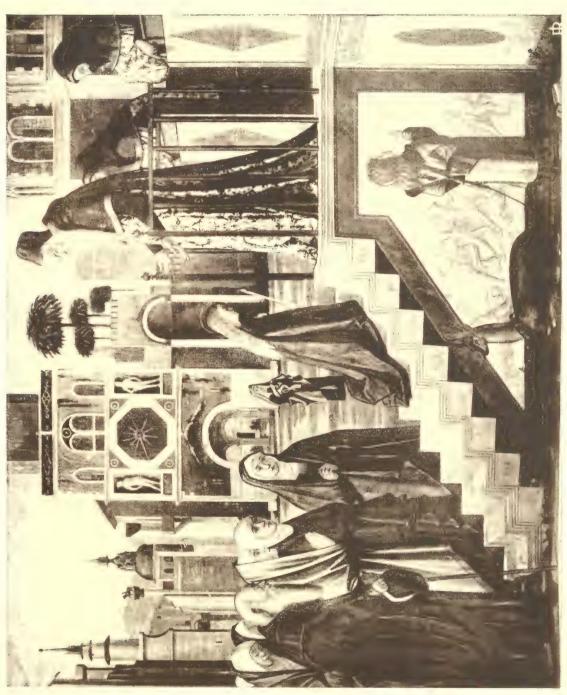
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THE PRESENTATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Nov. 21.

LTHOUGH God assumed human rather than angelic nature, He willed that these glorious and incorporeal beings should be witnesses of all the wonders of His love. There is joy

in heaven when mysteries are accomplished upon earth; and it is the Angels of God who feel that joy, and who ever desire to look and rejoice. The divine operations of the Holy Ghost are watched adoringly—"On Him the Angels desire to look"—and from their place of vantage they discern the divine visitation, while men are still ignorant of it and know not whence He cometh nor whither He goeth. A prophet may in vision and revelation foresee the event and predict it, but his prophecy is forgotten by heedless mankind. Thus the Angels adored and sang to the Babe of Bethlehem, while earth slept, and the few shepherds who watched let not their thoughts stray from the sheep around them. Thus, again, Angels had welcomed the entry of their Oueen and celebrated her Coronation in heaven, ere the Apostles themselves discovered the mystery of Mary's Assumption. Thus, also, this day's Mystery, although foreseen and foretold by the Prophet-King, was witnessed only by Angels with heavenly rejoicing; for, in the sight of earth it seemed merely a simple touching ceremony in which only those immediately concerned could take interest. But for eight hundred years and





more the Church has led the devotion of her children The to celebrate the Festival of the Presentation of Mary Presentation in the Temple; and the joy possessed for ages by the of Our Angels is now shared by men, is part of the inheritance Blessed Lady of all those who are children of the Church. The Guardian Angel, who is with each one of us now. beheld the wonderful sight, perchance was one of those who descended to swell the acclamations and join in the festivity and gladness with which the Ark of the Covenant, the True Ark in whom the Holy of Holies was really to be laid, entered the Temple of Jerusalem. The City heard not or heeded not singing that was listened to at Bethlehem, and Joachim and Anna, though thrilled with the harmony, spoke not of their dignity and bliss; and therefore, though the prediction of a prophet was being fulfilled, Jerusalem remained unmoved as when, in later years, the Lord Himself visited His Holy Place.

And yet it is a most memorable event, the first occasion on which the Church invites "all who love her" to congratulate Mary, and rejoice with her in her Presentation. Tradition has preserved a few precious details of Mary's Childhood. When she is presented in the Temple, she is but three years of age, but the little Maiden is already wiser and more prudent than the most enlightened Cherub in heaven. Joachim and Anna bring her as an Offering to the Lord; but they are only executing her own design: she has already made her choice; she has decided on the future; and alone and unaided the Child-Virgin mounts the steps of the sacred Temple. She has been called: "Harken, Daughter, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house" (Psalm xliv.) It is of Mary that

the words are truest, "When I was a little one, I pleased the Most High." This little Child is that chosen creature whose spotless brow has never been without its bright crown of the Immaculate Conception, whose soul and spirit are clothed with corresponding grace, who has gifts innumerable bestowed upon her, who already is "full of grace," with knowledge, charity, and the complete power of using her magnificent reason and will, that she too, from the beginning, while yet nourished with milk and honey and childhood's fare, may "choose the good." Do not wonder then, if she quits her gentle mother's bosom to run and throw herself into the arms of that Heavenly Father who bids her forget her earthly father's house. Angels assemble to behold their little Sister, their Queen Elect. "Who is this ascending to the Temple, casting in her lot with us, Child of God, Sister of Spirits, innocent Victim of an as--yet-uncounselled Virginity?" "I have chosen to be abject in the house of my God "-abject in the eyes of her people, who despised the unmarried and considered sterility a curse. The astonished Angels marvel at the swiftness of the divine impulse: they behold her mount the steps with unfaltering purpose, and with a solemn Vow in her heart and on her silent lips: they listen, they alone hear that Vow, unrevealed to her own parents; they exult to be present at an utter, absolute, irrevocable act of self-consecration—for now mortal lips first pronounce the Vow of Virginity. Mary has "chosen the best part," which shall not be taken away from her for ever. She has heard the Divine Vocation: Arise, My Love, My Dove, My Beautiful One, and come! The sacred doves of the Temple fly not more swiftly from the gardens of Jerusalem to the nest in its walls wherein they have

laid their young ones than does this Child and Seraph The eagerly hasten to the altars of her King and her God, Presentation obeying the sweet Will of her Father in heaven, elected of Our Sister and Mother to the Word, chosen Bride of the Holy Blessed Lady Ghost. As the summer cloud passes swiftly across the blue sky, and is lost to view in the distant heavens, so does this Spotless Innocence, this little white-robed Virgin of Israel disappear within the Temple's porch. The Lord is with thee, fairest Child! Brightest Cloud formed of earth's purest dew, purer than that of the very Paradise of delights and unfallen innocence, full of grace, and destined to "rain down the Just One!" The Lord is with thee. The God who rides on chariot cherubim while "the hills bend beneath the journeys of His eternity"—He guides thy way; His Prophet has foretold this mystery: Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud.

"God is consoled in His Saints:" who, then, shall declare the Divine delight, when this Prudent Virgin dedicated herself to Him in the Temple, when the Lily of Israel, infant Innocence itself, was placed among the Angels of the ages? At last earth has blossomed a Flower worthy of Divine acceptance. The great God loves lowly things, and none can be more lowly-minded than this Handmaid of the Lord. And He, the great God, in granting her favour and blessing her, shortens the interval and hastens the time appointed for Redemption. When He made in the beginning the day and night, He "saw that it was good:" still more does He bless the day which He fixes for the Incarnation, the day when this virginal Flower shall virginally bear Fruit, and the Fruit shall be the Word Made Flesh, the day when this Babe of Anna and Joachim shall be

His Mother, and He shall be her little One! Of this in her humility she dreamed not: enough for her to be partaker of the divine nature by the communication of grace, to be sister to the Angels by virginity, to be lowliest Spouse of the Incarnate God as handmaiden to His Mother, if that might be. But it has been decreed that "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son," and Mary unwittingly, by this vow of virginity, betrays herself to be that predestined Virgin whom all generations shall call blessed.

In this little Child presented in the Temple the Church bids us see the true and living Temple of the Lord, the sacred and untouched Ark of the Covenant, wherein the Living Bread come down from heaven shall be made for us by the Holy Ghost. We are bidden to revere that Virginity which in the love of God is ever identified with her Divine Maternity. Even in the idea of God she existed not apart from the divine purposes which were accomplished in her and through her. She was created to be the Mother of God: her Virginity is, like her Divine Maternity, of her very personality. Earthly Mother of Him Whose filial love in Heaven is the Father's alone, she shall have a name for that Virginity of hers which shall indicate its surpassing resemblance to the Heavenly Father's, and she shall be called the "Eternal Virgin."

And yet another title belongs to her from this day. She is the Virgin of Virgins. "After her virgins shall be brought to the King: they shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing, they shall be brought into the Temple of the King." By right of her consecrated life in the Temple, she is the Pattern of Virginity, and, next to her title of Mother of God her sweetest and

dearest is Virgin of Virgins. Nay, there is again The here also an identity to be declared. "One is your Presentation Father in heaven, one your Master, and one also the of Our Ideal of Virginity, according to whom you should Blessed Lady re-model the image of integrity engraved by the Holy Ghost," After her virgins shall be brought, and with gladness and rejoicing: she is the very Cause of Joy to those who by imitating her are freed from the "tribulations" written of by St. Paul. For even as the heart of God is the Fountain of all joy, even as it is with infinite and eternal unbeginning and unending iov and delight that the Word is begotten in the bosom of the Father, so must the heart that is to be His earthly home be full of joy as well as grace. And as the Angels live in joy, their Oueen, their Virginal Sister must be no stranger to the beatitude which is their dwelling. And because the young in loving imitation consecrate themselves in the flower of their youth and innocence, they preserve that joy which is the birthright of purity: and therefore are they all like this angelic Child, who on the day of her Presentation is the very embodiment of ecstatic gladness. Ah, our word to the Lamb of God perchance must be Miserere nobis! but they who faithfully follow the Faithful Virgin are joyous here, and hereafter sing their song that no one else can sing, follow Him whithersoever He goeth, and wear the Aureole of Virginity, a bridal wreath that shall never fade, a golden halo that shall never wane.

As the love and worship of Mary, so the love and practice of Virginity is a special characteristic of the Catholic Church. She alone loves and encourages this angelic state of life. "Nowhere is the holy and heavenly mandate of eternal virginity happily fulfilled except

amongst us Christians, and in this there is plainly a great proof that we are the true Religion." So wrote St. Athanasius to Constantius. Heathenism and heresy have ever exhibited hatred and cowardly cruelty towards Christian virginity. The martyrdoms of St. Lucy, St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, and so many others seem to turn upon their noble resolve to be faithful unto death. And what heathenism did at the beginning of the Christian world heresy repeats at the end. The palm of Martyrdom was placed in their intrepid hands, and the crown of Virginity upon their unsullied brows. One of the signs of the end of the world, we are told in the Gospel, will be this—marrying and giving in marriage, in thoughtless worldliness, in neglect and scoffing scorn of this fairest manifestation of Charity and Joy in the Holy Ghost. As this was the end of antediluvian heathenism, so will it be the end of modern heresy and infidelity, and it will draw down upon a wicked and corrupt generation the final doom of fire. But the Church, according to Mary, the one Ideal, is as a "Chaste Virgin presented unto Christ," and will ever fulfil the mandate of eternal Virginity, from the virgin veiled and secluded in the cloister to the virgin hovering, angel-like, over the sick and dying in hospital or fever-den—from the silent monk to the priest who "washes among the innocent" virginal hands, which are now to hold aloft the Lamb of God, and now to pour on the sinner's soul that Precious Blood which cleanseth the scarlet sin into stainless snow. And all these are "Virgins brought after her into the Temple of the King."

Thus let us think of Mary in the Temple, lending to the Psalms of her royal ancestor the interpretation of her vast spirit, the devotion and heavenly sweetness of her voice, she alone unconscious that the angelic The choirs cease their song to listen to this little Child Presentation chanting more sweetly than any Seraph in the joyful of Our melody above, abbreviating by the purity of her prayer Blessed Lady the seventy weeks upon her people and the holy City. How Jesus must have loved that Temple, His Father's House, His Mother's Home! No wonder He was found there after the Three Days' Loss! As for us, let us at least pray with the Church that at length we may be presented in the Temple of God's glory built in the City of the New Jerusalem.

If here our hearts love aught but Thee,
In that bright Land beyond the grave,
We'll worship Thee with soul set free,
And give as Mary gave.

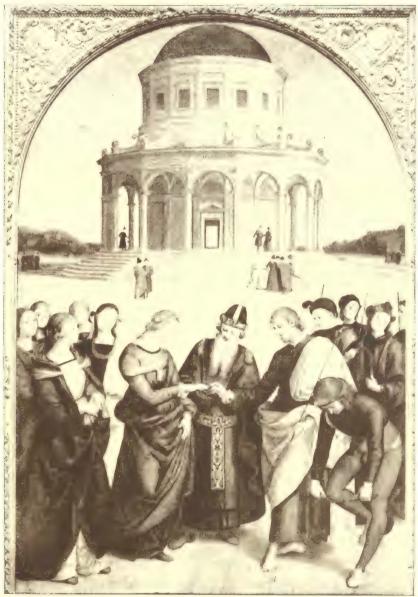
THE ESPOUSALS OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Jan. 23.

of those Saints of God whom it hunted, tortured and put to death. Neither was the world worthy of the knowledge of the Mysteries of God which concerned those Saints. This explains why the Mysteries remained for ages unknown, or known only to a few. And before the world could be fully taught them, it had to be brought to confess its wickedness, its need of a Redeemer, its guilt in having put that Redeemer to a cruel death. All this was what the Apostles and their immediate successors had to teach and preach in season and out of seasons: developments of their doctrines were to come later.

After a while, and in these our days—I do not say it is because we are worthy—God has deigned to impart much that was withheld at first: and the Holy Ghost has guided the Church and her children to the recognition and celebration of many a sweet mystery and doctrine. These are the works of God performed by the Holy Spirit, "on whom the Angels desire to look." Amongst them, one great work of the Holy Ghost—for long unnoticed by the faithful, and unhonoured by any special festival—is that which we commemorate to-day, the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin.

I do not mean that this is an unmentioned Mystery; it is duly recorded to have been accomplished. But the



ALINARI BROS.



Evangelists only state the fact that our Lady was The espoused to St. Joseph, without saying when or where. Espousals Probably, as is commonly held, it was after her Parents' of Our death; and as she had been confided to the care of the Blessed Lady priests of the Temple, the ceremony would naturally take place within the Temple so soon as the Blessed Virgin had reached the age at which maidens who had been nurtured there went back to their own homes. The priests of the Temple no doubt had felt from the first that in Mary the House of God possessed a child of benediction, and they would feel it a sacred duty to find one truly just and worthy to take charge of David's royal daughter.

To every espoused maiden her marriage is the turning point, the great event of her life. Strong must be the inducement that makes her consent to exchange her state for that of matrimony. To no one could the prospect of marriage appear more undesirable and formidable than to the Virgin of Virgins. Not for a moment ought we to imagine that Mary was kept in ignorance of the Divine Complacency with which the Almighty had received her Vow of Virginity offered by her from the first. We cannot suppose that she had misgivings lest the Providence of God should fail her and not preserve her, whatever difficulties or obstacles might arise. Surely, she must have been conscious of being predestined to something very especial, though, as yet, she had not learned what it precisely was that the Lord intended. She knew that it was in furtherance of the divine designs that she should become the Spouse of Joseph: and doubtless the Holy Ghost made known to her the holiness, the dearness to God of him who was selected for her by the guardians of her youth and

innocence. We are told that they in turn were directed in their choice by a miraculous sign, by the flowering of Joseph's staff-like the flowering of the rod of Aaron. We are willing to believe this of the ministers of the Temple, that they had reverenced and loved the daughter of Joachim and Anna, had been conscious of the presence of Angels who came with her whenever she drew nigh, had observed the acceptable ascendency over her companions which was hers from the first, and had been reluctant to allow the departure of one so blessed, even though it was to enter the peaceful dwelling which was to be hers at Nazareth. I love to think that Simeon and Anna both were present at these Espousals, were enlightened by the Holy Spirit to know that the Husband was deemed worthy even by God Himself to have charge of Mary, and to know that mysteries and secrets of God were hidden between the calm exterior and composed demeanour of Mary and Joseph.

We cannot doubt that between the Spouses there was a complete understanding. At all times in the life of the Church there have been among her children those who in the holy state of wedlock have chosen and consented to remain always virgin-spouses. Sometimes we are told what passed between them: it is thus that we know of St. Cecilia and her husband St. Valerian. We know also that often, without spoken word, God's Saints have held intercourse and exchanged their holy thoughts, and, after conversation like the Angels', parted from one another to meet again in heaven. And it may have been thus on this occasion between Our Lady and St. Joseph. That there was a complete understanding, we cannot doubt: and the Virgin espoused to Joseph went to Nazareth with the

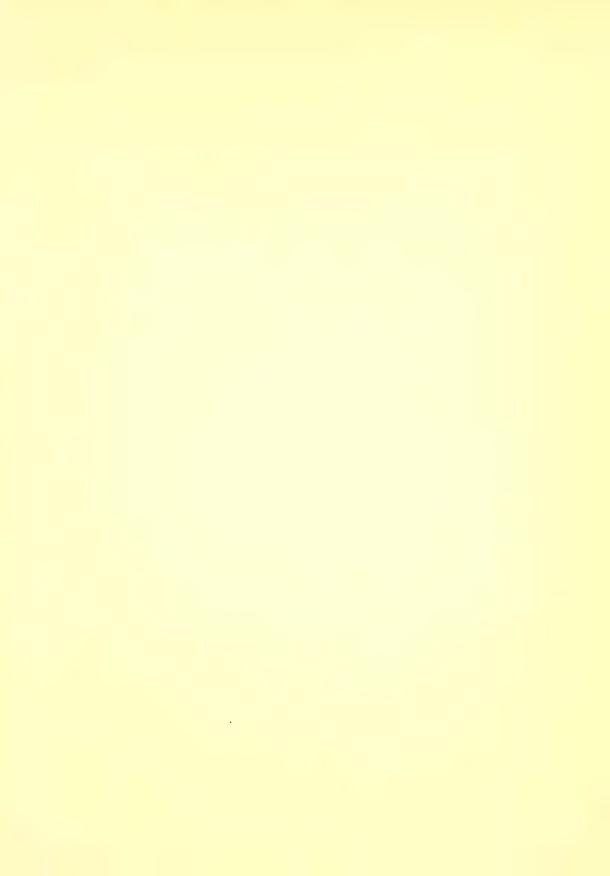
confidence and alacrity with which a Saint of the The Desert would guit his community at the call of God Espousals to lead the hermit life. of Our

Devotion will delight in picturing, with such power Blessed Lady of imagination as may be ours, the impressive scene of the marriage ceremony: the Blessed Virgin's farewell to her companions, the maidens who had learned to love her during their sojourn in the Temple's cloisters, the kind interest of grave priests and doctors who had been "astonished at her wisdom and her answers," even as they were afterwards when her Divine Son found His way to the sacred abode of His Mother in her childhood; the blessings pronounced upon her by Anna the prophetess, and Simeon the just and devout. We may in spirit invoke St. Raphael, and with him watch the pleasant journey of the Spouses to the modest home in the village of Nazareth, witness the affectionate care and reverence of Joseph, the gentle love and confidence of Mary, hear her praise of the little home which was to be theirs in future, whether it had belonged to his parents or, as some think, to her own, and lastly, observe the content with which she at once entered on the domestic duties which she had meekly undertaken. These things are more easily imagined than described; but Mary's gracious acceptance of the part allotted to her has made every Christian home holier and dearer till the end of time.

We are assured that the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin took place, for many reasons, on which St. Jerome and other Fathers have written much. them, God provided for the honour of His Virgin Mother, thus making the calumnies of the incredulous impossible: though it appears that the spirit of the

impious Helvidius still lingers among some heretics, who still dare to endeavour to lessen and destroy the glory of this ever-virginal Matrimony, which secured to Mary the holiest of Guardians, the most faithful of witnesses. It provided a Foster-father for the Child Whom this "Virgin would conceive," one whose patient labour should support the Child and His Mother, one whose manhood should protect them in every danger. St. Ignatius the Martyr adds that by means of it the Almighty veiled the Mystery of the Incarnation from the suspicions and discovery of Satan.

To us all unworthy it is permitted to meditate on these bright and beautiful Nuptials, and to bless God who gave to the Child and His Mother as Foster-father and Spouse one who never caused to Either a moment's unhappiness or pain, till he gently passed from Their loving arms into eternity.





HABITAVITQUE IN DOMO DOMINI SUI

SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Mar. 19.

HE simplicity of the Gospel, and its persuasive attractiveness in consequence, are well exemplified in these few words exchanged between Nathaniel and Philip: Can any good come out of Nazareth? Come and see. But the Text suggests to me another Philip saying to us: Come and see. Our own Saint, whose name is dear to us, whose white hairs win such love, seems himself to send us in search of the Saint of the Hidden Life, and of beautiful old age, and bids us: Go to Joseph. The Good that came out of Nazareth we know, "we have seen His glory:" but the good, dear, silent Saint who dwelt and died there must be seen there, if we would understand what a joy and grace our Lady must have found in the choice God made, when the Carpenter was called to be the Protector and "Husband of her Virginity." Therefore, it seems fit that St. Joseph should find a place in our narrative, whenever we are relating the joys and gifts granted to our Lady, especially during that period which is called the Hidden Life. His holiness and merits are far beyond our power of comprehension, but he would wish us to dwell on them, and in the manner now adopted, because whatever he had from God he considered given to him for the sake of Mary, and obtained for him by her prayers, and maintained in him through his conjugal union with the Blessed Virgin.

To be "dispenser of the mysteries of God," a guardian of sacraments, like a priest, is a great trust and honour, and to be the guide and guardian of the Flock of Christ, like a Pope, is still greater. Many Saints have earned their crowns by faithfully discharging these high offices: but one and one alone has been entrusted with the sole guardianship of that Most Sacred Sacrament instituted by the Holy Ghost on the altar of Mary's virginal Heart. The honour of this office belongs exclusively to St. Joseph. It almost seems to isolate him "among his brethren," to place him in grace and in glory apart from all fellow Saints, to make him whom we most frequently invoke as Patron appear almost inaccessible to ourselves. Thus does he appear to us, but to appreciate what he was to our Blessed Lady we must go to Nazareth itself. Come and see.

The little city nestles in the bosom of the mountains of Galilee—fifteen of them crown it, like an encircling rosary; we are told that men might pass along their ridges and overlook the lurking city altogether, as we overlook a breathless bird crouching down on her secret nest close to our path. How bright is the sunshine which sleeps on the turf-clad hills around! Flocks of sheep stray quietly and feed on the smooth sward, while the lambs lie like daisy-dots on the warm, sheltered slopes. Below wind garden-like terraces, where the olive, the fig, the vine are putting forth their young shoots. The loud-flapping dove darts out into the blue sky for glee, and drops again to murmur his contentment to the south wind. The air is quite laden with the fragrance of blossoming fruit trees, planted as they are everywhere, in the gardens and

by the paths through flowering meadows: for Nazareth Saint Joseph, is named the Flowery, and abounds with roses and Spouse of lilies, as if to adorn the dwelling place of a Saint Our Blessed whose emblem is the lily. A few shepherds tend the Lady sheep on the upper grounds, a few labourers in the gardens are pruning the bleeding vines, a few maidens slowly fetch water from the well. All are poor villagers, as their humble cottages bear witness. For the most part the homes are empty, and their inhabitants abroad, parents working, and the children collected in one from which their bee-like murmur now and then escapes. Perhaps that house which stands a little apart is a trifle better than most of the dwellings; and yet after all it is only a carpenter's abode, and

close by is the shed in which he labours at his work. Come and see. How quiet and recollected is his every movement! He is not young, nor is the Nazarene now of a very vigorous frame. His face is beautiful. calm, spiritualized, worn and wasted with prayer and love, lofty, and chaste in simple innocence. St. Joseph looks as we should expect one to look whom the Holy Ghost calls Just. We will study that countenance awhile, and when evening comes to bid him rest we will follow and learn the secrets of which it tells, secrets bound up with the justices of his gifted soul. His is a tried face, and a pensive face, and even while he

works it wears a look of perpetual worship.

humility has been up in heights beyond the reach of our knowledge, and has meekly dropped back from height after height, as a silver stream descends to hide itself in the tranquil lake that lies at some mountain's foot. The lake is calm, as if stilled by the mountain's presence; but there is a calm as deep in

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the undisturbed, reposeful worship and love which fill the soul of this silent Saint. It seems as though the great God were close, and that the face of Joseph reflects His presence, as the motionless lake will mirror a mountain's shadow. Nay, the great God is close; there, in the little cradle over which His Mother bends lovingly while she waits for Joseph to join in the evening adoration and prayer. Together they adore the Babe of Bethlehem, and make their united prayer to that speechless Word Made Flesh.

Let us meditate on what they themselves were to one another.

Joseph was, then, the chosen wedded Husband of the great Mother of God. He was united in matrimony with the greatest of all the creatures of God. Such an union implies, if not equality, still proportion, similarity. Hence, like Mary, he was vowed to a spotless lifelong virginity to which their marriage added a lustre which has allured many a canonized couple to imitate them. When the Desire of the everlasting hills came, He found His Foster-father on earth like one of the Angels He left in heaven, pure as the eternal snows of Lebanon. The humility of Joseph also was, like Mary's, most profound. His soul mounted in contemplation to dizzy heights, and was not elated: it fell back in self-abasement before the majesty of God, as streams that explore the recesses and secrets of the mountains hasten to hide themselves in the waters of the unfathomed lake below. descended still lower into the depths of humility in judging himself unfit and unworthy to be under the same roof with his Virgin Spouse, of whom he saw that Isaias had prophesied, and it required the persuasive eloquence of an Angel sent expressly to overcome his Saint Joseph, holy awe. Spouse of

Think how Mary loved and honoured him. If for Our Blessed such as we she has and shows such love, and will not Lady let one poor Ave of ours pass unrewarded, much more will she have recompensed all the devotion of her first great Client. She requited him with love-with the love which was due to the best of husbands, with the love which was due to the greatest of God's Saints, with the frankness of an affection, a confidence, an esteem which her own holy candour would not allow her to conceal, and his nobility of soul encouraged her to display. Yes, best of all—nay, more than all put together-after Jesus was Saint Joseph loved by Mary. It is a Saint who has declared, when measuring this love of Mary, that the Holy Spirit of Love, the Love of the Father and the Son, the Vinculum Trinitatis, the Bond of the Blessed Trinity, was Himself the Vinculum Indissolubile, the Indissoluble Bond of the Husband and Wife of Nazareth.

But how is it with them, when dangers and troubles threaten? Come and see.

In the dead of night an Angel was sent from heaven to the lowly dwelling. Swiftly darting down through myriads of bright stars, he came at last to his own comrades who in countless numbers were hovering as a body-guard and preventing by their presence the approach of evil spirits to the Holy House. Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him." Silently Joseph rose, gathered together a few needful things—the poor have

never want of many—and then he entered the chamber of the Child and His Mother. He found Mary already on her knees beside the Child, Who slumbered tranquilly. She listened to the whispered words of Joseph, meekly bent her head, gently lifted the sleeping Babe, and went forth from home into the dark night. Angels came and worshipped, as the fugitives passed through the silent village. Swiftly and noiselessly they passed along the pathway through the moonlit fields and vineyards, and unperceived by friend or foe gained the sheltering gloom of the mountain road to Bethlehem. Skirting that City and the dear roadside Cave, they kept down towards the stony plain and ere morning's dawn were far away and safe in the trackless desert.

The God of armies Who led forth Israel from Egypt is driven back from Israel into Egypt, and depends for His young life on the skill and prudence of Joseph. Roman soldiers seek in pursuit their fugitive Creator. And what will not the dark Egyptians do in revenge, when He that slew their first-born comes Himself amongst them a little helpless Babe? We need not fear: the Saviour is saved; for Joseph is sufficient screen and shield. We need not fear: the Hidden Life has many a year to run, and the shelter given by Saint Joseph is the security of that hiddenness. These Egyptians of Heliopolis may suspect a mystery and feel a Divine Presence, but whatever there is of beauty and marvel in the Child and His Mother to betray them is rendered harmless by the fearless dignity and silence of their Protector.

For seven years of exile all went well; the calm, brave thoughtfulness of Joseph provided against want and danger. For seven long years famine lay on the

land of Israel, and Nazareth remained deserted and Saint Joseph, desolate. Joseph in Egypt had the Living Bread; but Spouse of none came down as of old for relief. However, he Our Blessed forgave his brethren, as had been foreshewn by Lady Pharaoh's Joseph, and gladly heard the Angel bid him return to Palestine. He brought back all the wealth of Egypt and the whole world, Food for the famishing, Riches for the destitute, Salvation for Israel. But again "His own received Him not;" and Joseph feared to take the Holy Child into Judea, where reigned Herod's cruel son. And "being warned in sleep," he brought the Child into the quarters of Galilee, back to the quiet, secluded Nazareth. There, amongst the hills, for years the Lamb of God lay hid, and Joseph was His Shepherd; there, amongst the lilies and roses, the Flower of the Field opened Its entrancing loveliness, and Joseph guarded Its growth; there, God went into hiding, and Joseph defended the hiding place.

Again, Come and see. Come and see the joy of Joseph to find himself still retained as the Guardian, the Putative Father of Jesus, the Ruler of the Holy Family. What joy to receive from the Word Incarnate so many marks of obedience, reverence, subjection! To hear himself called Father by the Eternal Son, to hear Mary speak of him to Jesus as "Thy Father!" To receive sweet, oft-repeated kisses from the Babe and the Boy—to feel the frequent endearing caresses of the Child's arms flung round his neck! And then the—not joy, but consolation of being allowed to compassionate the weariness of the footsore Boy, and gently draw Him to rest in his own arms, when the youthful Wanderer had outgrown His Mother's, and yet was so fatigued! Ah, I dare assert that it is an eternal joy to Him who

now is in the Bosom of the Father to recall the Rests He took during the Return from Egypt in the bosom of Joseph. But how to describe a life, an intercourse so blissful, when it was throughout nothing else but heart for heart, look for look, kiss for kiss, and love for love?

Come and see—another beautiful sight in this quiet. hidden life. Jesus is now no longer a Boy. He has attained His full stature; His beauty is beyond the beauty of men, and He is so like His Mother. He is strong and vigorous, and it is long ago since He carried with perfect ease the water from the well which was wanted in the household. He has just performed this task, and now approaches Joseph, who is feebly and patiently attempting work beyond his failing strength. It is nearly thirty years since we first beheld him, and now the head of the Nazarene is white as snow, and there seems to play around it a light that is growing brighter with the dawning of another life. What love, and respect, and praise speak in the voice of Jesus, as He bids His dear Foster-father finally yield his place, and cease from work for ever! He had not to command: never did He address Joseph in such a form. No, the sound of His sweet voice sent the Saint into ecstasy, and when he woke he found all things reversed—Jesus working in his stead, and the Mother and Child now serving him who had served Them so long and well!

When the Lord shall gird Himself, and passing minister to His servants, we know that they are in heaven. Was it not thus with Joseph? Come and see. His body day by day grew weaker, his frame yielded to the impetuous beatings of his heart. The whole world was waiting for Jesus; but He let it wait, for

He was serving Joseph. This could not last: and Mary Saint Joseph, came and told her Son that Joseph was asking to die Spouse of at His blessed feet. Jesus came quickly to the bedside. Our Blessed The dying Saint strove to rise and once more cast Lady himself at the feet of his Lord and God, but the arms of that Lord were folded around him, and he fell back into his Beloved One's bosom. As Jesus, seated on the couch, supported him, who shall declare the entrancing peace and rest He gave to that snow-white head pillowed on His breast? Oh, it lay there like a pure white lily, it nestled there like the spotless dove we are told came in by-gone years and lit on his virgin staff! Thus, in peace, in rest, in love, in sight of Mary, in the arms of Jesus, in Osculo Domini-Joseph fell asleep.

May Our Lady forgive the boldness with which we have discussed so many of her gifts from God, and this especially of having been confided to one so worthy of her loving trust, the Just Man selected by the Holy Ghost to represent Himself in the Holy Family. Death dissolves the marriage tie and gives back to all spouses their much-prized liberty. But there is that higher union of supreme sanctity which remains for ever unbroken, and which retains Saint Joseph even in the heavenly court in his place of honour near the King and Queen. Jesus has not forgotten that He was known on earth as "the Carpenter's Son," Mary forgets not that she was his wedded wife. Thus it comes to pass that, all resplendent as Joseph is in the heavens above, there is a look of Nazareth about this dazzling Association of glory. We recognise our Saint, we think we hear him saying: I am Joseph, come nearer to me. The world is still an Egypt, but we need not fear famine or any evil; we can "Go to Joseph;" we feel

"Emboldened to speak to him." We speak to him of the toils of life, of the journey and dangers of life, and of our coming death. Mothers must, like Mary, trust their babes to him. Children must be dedicated to the Protector of the Holy Child. Youths and virgins must make a friend of the Saint whose Lily lifts up its stately head in the white lustre and confidence of unsullied innocence. There is no Saint like St. Joseph to teach the poor trembling priest how to act with his Lord and God, how to hold, and carry, and offer the Lamb of God. Wedded love must be blessed, and made true, lasting, forbearing, unsuspicious and holy by the Virgin Husband of the Virgin Wife. Death must find us invoking the Saint who died in the arms of Jesus, must seal for ever on our trembling lips the last invocation of undying love for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.





RESPEXIT HUMILITATEM ANCHILE SULE

THE HUMILITY OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Maii 12.

WR Mother and Mistress speaks: she "opens her mouth in the churches of the Most High" (Ecc. 24), saying: Now therefore ye children hear: Blessed are they who keep my ways (Pro. 8). The strange moment chosen for this her greatest lesson is not without special meaning.

The Virgin of the Temple is now become the Virgin Wife in the village of Nazareth, wedded to Joseph the Just and Virginal. She and he share, like brother and sister, the seclusion and peace of their hidden life of unsuspected sanctity. His day is passed in work and prayer, his night in rest and sleep—he is wearied and requires this: her day is spent in silence and spinning, and in such domestic duties as their poverty and contentment permit, her night is spent in solitude and prayer, for she finds in prayer her best repose, and her intervals of sleep are few and brief. So is she found by Gabriel, when star-clad he delivers the Divine Message to the Virgin. Though his embassy succeeds, the words of the Angel trouble Mary. words of praise surprise her, but she takes refuge in humility expressed in her own sweet way: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord! The sound of her own sweet voice, speaking soft and low, helps to dispel the momentary fear, and reassures the Ambassador of heaven: he exults to hear the same hushed voice continue

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perchance in still gentler accents: Be it done unto me according to thy word. And, according to that word—"While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, the Almighty Word descended from His royal throne in heaven, from the bosom of His Father to the tranquil bosom of His Chosen Virgin Mother, who has deepened the peace and calm of all creation by these her first recorded words: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord.

The Handmaid! Most Prudent Virgin, at this moment why such a name? O Blessed Virgin, the title He offers thee is that of Mother . . . Wilt not thou allow it, if but for once? Wilt thou not wear His priceless present, murmur thy new name, that He may hear it from thine own lips, though thou dost afterwards lay it aside and hide it? Nay, in humility she murmurs "Handmaid!" That name which Mary leaves unsaid is of infinite dignity. The Incarnation brought to the Mother of the Word Made Flesh a dignity which St. Thomas asserts is infinite. St. Bonaventure fearlessly declares: A greater world, a greater heaven God can create; but He cannot create a greater Mother than this His Mother. Yet she calls herself His Handmaid. As all the gifts and graces of the Sacred Humanity are because Christ is the Son of God, so all Mary's graces are because she is Mother of God. And yet she clings to this lowliest of all humble names! In this is her virtue shown. The Holy Ghost has already said: The greater thou art, humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find favour with God. Humility and innocence are the beauty of the soul, excelling all exterior perfections, as spirit surpasses matter: Mary is filled with this humility—"all the glory of the king's daughter is within "—and, therefore, while declaring The that "favour is deceitful and beauty vain" (Prov. xxx.), Humility the Spirit exclaims to the Bride, the Holy Ghost to of Our Mary: How fair thou art, My Beloved, how fair thou Blessed Lady art! "Her virginity pleased God, but her humility conceived Him." Let us meditate on that humility, while the King is at His repose, and breathes the spikenard fragrances given forth so sweetly by her humble Heart.

Heaven lost its fairest angel, Paradise lost our first fair mother: and it was through pride that both fell. because they yielded to aspiring ambition. On this Rupert remarks: God knew that the headship of creation could not be held with humility except by the Incarnate Word Himself, the meek and lowly-hearted Jesus. Therefore God chose for the Mother of One so humble of heart as Jesus that most humble Virgin, her who clung to her lowliness and still called herself His Handmaid even while receiving a dignity far beyond the comprehension of the highest Angel. "I the Lord have brought down the lofty tree, and exalted the lowly tree" (Ezec. 17, 24). "Blessed art thou who hast believed!" exclaimed St. Elizabeth, praising the Virgin's Faith; but Mary replied: For this all generations shall call me blessed—because He hath regarded the humility of His Handmaid. It was humility that brought her the blessing of Axa. "Fountains spring forth in the vales" . . . God sent His Son-divine and human, "the upper and the lower Living Water"—to this lowly Valley, and thither, breathing their blessings, all who are athirst ever make their way and are refreshed. Yea, God Himself is here mirrored in the humility of Mary. "The great God dwells on high, but regards the lowly," and

He hath regarded the humility of His Handmaid. "With me is the Fountain of Life;" in the crystal depths is also seen the Face of the Father; and the Heavenly Dove, white and gentle, loves and haunts this clear Fountain and this His "Enclosed Garden."

The Holy Ghost, divine and all-wise architect, in building the beautiful Temple of the Sacred Humanity laid its deep foundations in the humility of the Virgin Mother's Heart. Safe and firm were the foundations: for Mary declared and dwelt lovingly on the nothingness of her origin. The more graces she received, the more did her generous, grateful soul magnify the Lord and attribute all to Him. Never did she sink deeper into the very depths of her being than when the Angel spoke: but the Word of God penetrated those crystalline depths, and made His own the Pearl of Purity and Humility, while at the very moment when His touch ennobled her with infinite dignity, Mary fell at the feet of God's messenger with her: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord! "Whoso wishes to be praised is proud," says St. Augustine: St. Gregory adds, "Praise tortures the good." Mary was disturbed by even an Angel's praise.

Humility refers all glory to God. Mary answers her cousin's: Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should visit me? Her answer is: My soul doth magnify the Lord.

Humility hides the gifts of God, keeps its own secret, as St. Philip used to say. Mary would not talk, even though she found that the Holy Ghost had told all to the dear Saint and kinswoman. Nor would she speak to St. Joseph, though she might have to lose him through that humility of his which she esteemed and

thought far deeper than her own. Nor would she ever The by praising her Child permit credit and glory indirectly Humility to reach herself. The amazed doctors of the Temple of Our shall hear no hint in her guarded speech. Not till the Blessed Lady end shall even an Evangelist learn from her the history of Bethlehem and those things which she kept pondering in her heart, and then revealed in words so humble that "the wise and prudent" are perplexed and unable to penetrate the hidden mysteries.

Consider also the humility of her every gesture and act and movement—all being the outward bearing and demeanour of that meek and lowly Heart whereon the Eternal slept. How lowly were her occupations, in the Temple, at Nazareth, in Egypt! She like her Son can say: I was poor and in labours from my youth. How humble was she in the kind, affectionate Visit to Elizabeth, in the gentle friendliness displayed at the Marriage Feast of Cana, in the sublime charity with which she the Sinless received and sheltered Mary Magdalen and kept her by her side! How humble in bearing without resentment the repulses of the Bethlehemites, the scorn with which They, poor strangers, were treated by the haughty Egyptians, scorn so startling to her who saw distinctly the divine beauty and majesty of the Child Jesus! How humble in silently submitting to the humiliation and the ceremonial of the Purification! She shrank not, but her purpose was defeated by the glory of the Light of Lights and the inspired voices of Simeon and Anna. How humble was she in taking the lowest place, even after the Ascension! Apostles are mentioned, and then in order the holy women, and finally "the Mother of Jesus"-named as she had placed herself—the very last! How humble

was Mary also in remaining so long upon the earth after the departure of Jesus—in shrinking from the triumph, though she shrank not from the suffering, in staying among us here for fifteen long years, parted from her Love and her Life! It looks as if the remembrance of that one AVE on earth and the trouble it caused her made her dread the million Aves which were to welcome her on high.

Let us then strive to imitate Mary by practising such humility as it behoves us to exhibit. Let us be humble in our judgment about ourselves, in our pursuits and occupation, and let us renounce discontent and restless ambition. Let us be humble in our personal appearance and dress. St. Gregory says: No one wishes to be finely dressed, except out of vanity. Let us be humble in obedience. Was it not an act of obedience to her Spouse the Holy Ghost, when Mary said: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word?



EXPECIATIO JUSTI LÆIIIIA

THE EXPECTATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

In Fest. Dec. 18.

kept during the sad season of Lent; and in former times this made the Church of Spain consider that it could not be celebrated with due festivity, and therefore in Spain the Feast of the Annunciation was celebrated on the 18th of December. The Spanish bishops, however, soon found that it was better they should return to the general practice, and conform to the Custom of the Church of Rome, the

Mother and Mistress of all the Churches. But Spaniards were unwilling to give up their devotion to the December day; so they were encouraged to dedicate it to the Expectation of our Blessed Lady; and subsequently the whole Church has adopted their devotion, and we all gladly unite in a universal celebration of this beautiful Festival.

Our thoughts go back to the midnight hour when Gabriel spoke his AVE, and follow the history of our Blessed Lady from that hour of the Annunciation. The Spirit of the Lord hovers over her, the Holy One nestles and rests within her tabernacle. From the praises of Elizabeth she has escaped by returning home. The humility of Joseph has been appeared, his anxieties are quieted by angelic admonitions, her joy is great at his peace of mind and his resolve to remain in his exalted trust, and she is full of inward, silent bliss.

Her fingers work deftly at the Expected One's linen and swaddling clothes, though tears of gladness fall on the sewing, though the hands sometimes tremble with emotions of delight. Ah, she sits and sews, with her modest head bent down over the work for her Babe, thinking of the little limbs she herself is to swathe, thinking of the fair form, the beautiful Infant that is to lie in her arms, thinking of the hour when she will see Him, when she will touch and handle Him, when she will nurse Him. O Blessed Virgin! O Blessed Mother!

And then again we see her. Once more she quits the little home; once more she journeys with her unborn Jesus, this time, obeying with Joseph the Census law of Cæsar. How different, Eternal One! is this Thy journey from those of old! Then, Thou didst ride on the wings of cherubin; then, the seas fled away, the hills were melted, the deep lifted up its hands, the mountains bowed down beneath the journies of Thy eternity! And now, lightly and secretly dost Thou pass, unseen and noiselessly, and the Virginal Womb is Thy Car of Ivory! Like "a light Cloud," she leaves the valley of Nazareth, and, in obedience to the gentle breathings of the Spirit, carries the Divine Dew to the hillside of Bethlehem, where sheep and shepherds stray. Blessed is the Womb that bore Thee, O Eternal Wisdom! Blessed the Ark, wherein not Thy Commandments but Thou Thyself wast carried, the Cradle in which Thou "that slumberest not" didst first sleep, to the lullaby and music of a Mother's beating Heart! Blessed be that Paradise, where for Nine Months God dwelt in living identity of life with the life of His Virgin-Mother! Blessed be that Prison of Purity, where Captive Chastity for Nine Months was detained! Ah, Son of God, Son of the

Virgin Mary, Fruit of her holy womb! There Thou The hast learned, in the abode Thou "didst not dread," Expectation from the things Thou didst suffer, obedience--but the of Our sweet obedience to a gentle Mother's will. There Blessed Lady Thou didst gain Thy first experimental knowledge of the human heart, that strangely attractive thing Thou hast left heaven to conquer. If Thou now dost ask us for our hearts, is it not because Thou hast found such sweetness, such love in the Heart which was Thy first earthly home? How complacently Thou didst gaze into the fountains of deep love welling up to worship Thee from that deep Heart! "Man shall approach a deep heart, and God shall be exalted"... Still more shall God be exalted when He Himself shall draw nigh. Thou dost watch over the sleep of Thy Beloved, and weave into the delightful dreams of her innocent young mind most blissful yearnings for the mother's jov, most entrancing visions of Thy Face, overpowering in sleep the timid, lowly shyness of Thy Handmaid and Chosen Mother.

And now we may ask how does this peculiar, tender, most heavenly Mystery affect us poor children of men, who have been, and still are, sinners in thought and word and deed? Let us not be discouraged: let us try to love our God, Who pardons so readily, "ten times more" than we ever before have loved Him. Thus may we hope to bear Christ in our own poor hearts; for it is His Apostle who encourages us to strive "till Christ be born again in our hearts." As it was only into the blessed womb of His Virgin Mother that He would come, so now it is only to the happy hearts of those who love Him that He will entrust Himself. Cherish Him in your hearts; for you are cherished in

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His. "Ye are carried by My bowels, are borne up by My womb. Even to old age I am the same, and to your grey hairs will I carry you. I have made you, and will bear and will carry, and will save."

Let us then lift up our heads and rejoice: our Lord tells us to do so even when we are surrounded with the horrors of the impending Day of Doom; still more easily can we do so when in the presence of this dear, bright, Mystery of holiness, which seems almost the most tender and beautiful of the Joyful Mysteries.

The Wise Man tells us: The expectation of the Just is joy (Prov. x. 28). Our Blessed Lady is Cause of our Joy, never more so than when she allows us to meditate on the sacred secrets of her maternal Expectation. Great indeed is her gracious condescension; for here we see Divine grace and power sanctifying unutterably the deepest, most subtile, most delicate feelings and experiences of human nature, and the unfallen nature of the Virgin Mother. The Cause of our Joy had this joy of Expectation, and we may approach and consider it, if we take warning like Moses, when he would inspect the Burning Bush; for indeed "the place is holy," a Sanctuary where we are before the first Tabernacle of God Incarnate. It is a mystery full of holiness, of Consuming Fire, of Transforming Love. Contact with God is holiness: and These Two are One-the Babe and the Mother, the Creator and the creature! Ah, it is a devotion for saints rather than sinners, for Seraphim rather than mortals, so sweet is it, so hidden and divine, "Like a secret told by Angels, Getting known upon the earth, Is the Mother's Expectation of Messias' speedy birth."

What was Mary expecting? To what was she

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looking forward? To the sight of her Babe. Already The He was hers: she knew it, felt it; and this led her Expectation to desire more, to long for more. With greater longings of Our than the Angels feel "who desire to look on the Holy Blessed Lady Ghost," she desired to behold the Word Made Flesh, to gaze on His human face and features. Twice does a mother look upon her child in a way that cannot be iterated. Two looks she gives which no other eyes but her own have the right or power to give—the first look and the last, the look of maternal joy and the look of maternal sorrow. "In the evening weeping shall take place, and in the morning gladness." In the evening of life the dying will seek that faithful look-the truest thing on earth—which will only be finally withdrawn when the death-cloth is laid for the last time on a cold, white face. She who knew herself to be the Mother of the Redeemer must already have had forebodings of such a sorrow in store for herself at the end: but we can well believe that "the spirit of Jesus" would not allow His fair young Mother to be bruised and crushed thus early, that He held her heart and mind to the anticipation of her first vision of her Divine Infant, that truer of her than of any should be His word: The Expectation of the Just is Joy.

The first look that a mother obtains of the child to whom she has given birth is one of the truest and greatest joys on earth, as is the last look one of the worst and greatest sorrows: and the sure anticipation of this joy, comparable only to the beatific vision, must have inundated the heart and soul of Mary with ecstatic bliss.

Her knowledge, the illuminations infused from above, and those drawn from the ponderings of her own Heart—all increased the delight of her Expectation. She well

knew that, unlike other babes, her Babe would return her gaze with full consciousness, would *know* her, would—speechless Word though He chose to be—hold intercourse with her by those looks for which she so longed.

Her experience of His content and joy increased her own. If St. Elizabeth could tell the joy of her babe as yet unborn, surely the Mother of the Lord would be able to count and interpret the murmured music of the Fountains of the Saviour, the earliest beatings of the Sacred Heart linked and lying so closely to her own! She confesses that so it was: Exultavit spiritus meus in Deo Salutari meo. Her Expectation was joy and exultation. The very sense of happiness grew greater day by day, took possession of her more and more. Hence the lightness of her step as she swiftly traversed the mountains of Judea. Hence the sweetness of her voice. It was indeed Vox turturis, the Voice of the Dove, so ravishing, so musical, so gladsome that the Baptist danced at the "sound of her greeting."

The security and peace of her Expectation added to the joy. Well had the Angel said, "Fear not, Mary." Here could be no misgivings, no anxieties. "Be it done unto me, according to Thy word" expressed the trust of Mary, the belief which seemed so glorious and blessed in the eyes of St. Elizabeth. Elizabeth knew that she herself, however favoured, could not aspire to share the happy privileges and immunities of the Virgin who was to bring forth the Saviour. In calm and silence, leaving all—even Joseph's peace of mind—to the care of God, Mary waited and fearlessly expected, waited in the smiling patience of a maiden who watches for the flowering of her favourite lily. "Like a lily, it shall bud forth and blossom," sang the Prophet.

What part have such as we in this Mystery? Ah, The like blind Bartimeus, we are ever crying out, "Domine, Expectation ut videam!" It is this which we desire, this and the of Our blessed light without which there can be no joy. "How Blessed Lady shall there be joy for me, who sit in darkness, and cannot see the light of heaven?" So spoke the blind Tobias to the Angel Raphael. But the answer came, "Joy to thee always:" and with the words came sight and the blessed light. Thus must it be with us, we must wait and wait, expect and expect, and trust that our prayer, "Show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus," will be answered, and our expectation cease.

But I treat of the expectation of the just: that of the sinful is far different. Fear, mistrust, doubt, horror, all fill the sinner's soul. Let us cast away all sin, and the happiness of a good conscience, the "joy of our salvation," will be restored to us. Remember, it is the expectation of the Just which brings joy, to Joseph the Just, to Simeon the Just. "Let him that is just be justified still. Lo, I come quickly. Come, Lord Jesus Christ." But is there place for us who are so coarse, so sinful, is there invitation to us to consider this most tender and holiest of Mysteries? Yes, Mother! even for us there is a place within its beautiful boundary, we too are bathed in the soft shining of the lamp of this Sanctuary! Though weeping must take precedence of our joy, still, thou art Cause of our Joy, that joy which so often enters our poor hearts. In thy Expectation we have at least this share. We, too, expect: for do we not perpetually pray to Thee, our Life, our Sweetness, and our Hope: After this our exile ended, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb JESUS?

THE JOY OF THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

In Festivitate.

()W lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts!" the Psalmist exclaims (Psalm lxxxiii.), and so lends us the very words we want to describe the Most Pure Heart of Mary. The beautiful, attractive outlines of Our Blessed Lady's life, from the Immaculate Conception to the Assumption and Coronation, are equally for all, but for us of the London Oratory the Devotion to the Heart of Mary has an especial charm. The Dedication of our Church declares this, and lays on us the duty of not allowing ourselves to be excelled in this Devotion. We, more than others, have the right to say, "O Sinless Heart, all hail, all hail!" The privilege which we have possessed since 1854 of worshipping God in a church so dedicated, is an invitation, a vocation from God to penetrate deeper than others into this lovely Tabernacle, this cloistered Dwelling of the Holy Ghost. To scrutinize a heart, to know its inmost secrets, is a right reserved to the Spirit of God, and He rarely allows even the greatest Saints to participate in its exercise. And yet, to know a life intimately, we must be acquainted with the heart's history. What are external events compared with thoughts and feelings? The noblest part of every one is the heart—the citadel of life, the treasury of love, that one thing which God Himself so values that He deigns to ask for it.



EXSULTAVIT SPIRITUS MEUS IN DEO SALUTARI MEO



Mary in heaven is adorned as a beautiful Bride. The Joy of Bright, "immense jewels" catch the lustre of her starry the Most crown, and she is enveloped in a blaze of brilliancy; Pure Heart of but it is not her jewels that give its brightness to the Mary bosom of the Oueen of Heaven, it is the glorified. beatified, exultant Heart, whose radiance seems to reach even us in the distant gloom and darkness of this world. They that explain Mary are promised life everlasting, and the thoughts of many hearts have already been revealed: yet there would seem to be always something fresh or different to be said in her praise, so that all generations may successively call her Blessed. Therefore let us in turn approach that deep Heart of Mary, and for us it will be easier to gaze upon it as it was in the morning of her life, in the days of her youth, when the humility and chosen lowliness of God's Handmaid hid all from the knowledge of those about her. We shall not have discovered by the end of the world all the things that Mary kept and pondered within her Heart.

That which is true of most lives, and ought to be of all, was pre-eminently true of Mary's in its beginning. God "makes joyful" our youth - "laetificat juventutem meam;"--" in the morning gladness shall abide," though there be weeping in the evening. This was the case with Our Lady, so let us begin by considering the earliest joy of her Most Pure Heart.

The Heart of Mary rejoiced because it was untouched, unstained by sin. There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart (Eccli. xxx. 16)—and there is no pleasure. no joy like that of light-hearted innocence. But never was there happy innocence like the innocence of that Heart. It was consciously, gratefully Immaculate, free

and untainted. It was fed with floods of knowledge surpassing the wisdom of Cherubim, and it responded to that vast knowledge by a proportionately boundless love above that of all the Seraphim. And yet what men beheld with unsuspecting admiration was a sweet and gracious little Maiden, distinguished, they thought, only by her modesty, her silence, her beauty. The lovely symmetry of her childhood was not disturbed by the possession and presence of these stupendous gifts of knowledge and love, by this elevation of her natural powers to a supernaturalness beyond all words.

Let us pass on to what was a still greater joy, to that hinted at in the Prophet's whisper: Thy Word was to me a joy and gladness to my heart (Jer. xv. 16). Why delay in saying that the love of her Most Pure Heart induced God to descend from Heaven-"For the heaven He left He found heaven in thee" (Faber). Bold words these, and yet, how true! Think of the Word in the Bosom of the Father, think of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. To that immense, tranquil Bosom the love of the Heart of Mary approached. It mounted, and, entering the Divine Family, so captivated the Eternal Father that He chose her for His Daughter, so won the Son that He elected her to be His Mother, so pleased the Holy Ghost that He chose her for His Spouse. Her Heart became an image of the Heart of the Eternal Father. The Word, spoken in the Divine Bosom, expressing the whole Infinite Being of the Father, was echoed in the Virginal Bosom of this Mother. In this Paradise of Purity, filled with the choicest flowers of grace, God descended once more to earth; and the AVE of His Angel makes us forget the grief of Eve. How truly could Mary exclaim:

Thy Word was to me a gladness and a joy to my The Joy of Heart! the Most

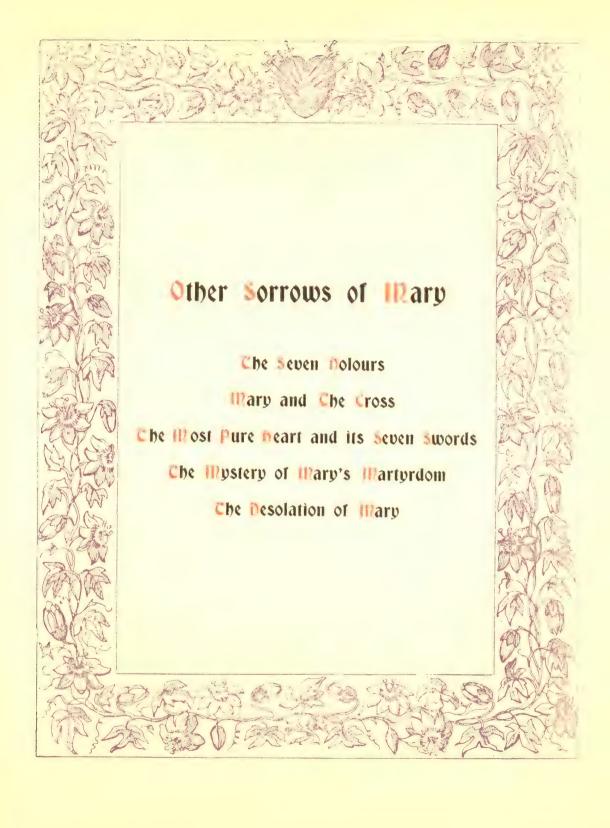
All affections widen and enlarge the heart, till at Pure Heart of last one becomes as it were all heart, nothing but heart. Mary Yet what are our strongest, holiest affections compared with those which, after the Ave of the Angel, flowed in rhythmic melody to and fro within the Heart of Mary? Those magnificent waves which went across the deep waters of that Abyss of love! Often we think wonderingly of the coldness and neglect so patiently endured by Jesus at our hands: but we cease to wonder, when we remember that against it He set the love of His Mother's Heart. "God shall be consoled in His Saints;" then, much more in His Mother! And what joy to her Heart to give Him such consolation! Ah, we are not worthy, nor are we able even to imagine the joy of those days, when His life and her life were one life in the blissful beatings of that ever-watchful Maternity. Mary spoke not of it, even to St. Joseph: she "kept all these words in her Heart." Yet Scripture says: The Expectation of the Just is joy—so we may be sure her Heart was filled to overflowing. Nav, did not the joy of her Heart affect her very voice and speech? Else why did Elizabeth exclaim: At the voice of Thy greeting, the infant in my womb leaped for joy? Why did Mary herself begin to sing? For joy. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"—my JESUS, as the Hebrew language permits the sweet Name. She is "Cause of our joy," and not alone of ours; St. Vincent Ferrers says that the Angels in heaven sang and danced for joy because of Mary.

We may picture to ourselves the scene at Hebron. The golden glow of an Eastern sunset lights up the

heavenly face and form of the Maiden-Mother, as she stands before the entranced Elizabeth and chants her ecstatic Hymn. But are not those uplifted eyes shining with rays of light from the Fountain of Light within her Heart? And the hands folded on her bosom—are they clasping her Treasure, or are they lifted in thanksgiving? Who can say? They seem lost in a dazzling effulgence of light and love. It is all a mystery for tender meditation rather than words.

And when He came forth exultingly in the fair frame and form which the Holy Ghost made for Him from Mary's substance, with the red Blood of Redemption mantling His cheeks, and bounding impetuously in the veins it might not yet leave, the joy of Mary did not cease or falter. Her joy that the Child was born surpassed and sanctified the joys of all other mothers, and she still might say: Thy Word was to me a joy and gladness of my Heart. For the Word that was made flesh and born of her remained with her in a blessed way. Nay, the blessing became greater, as Christ Himself said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it. Thus, the holiness of the Heart of Mary, its union with God, its beatitude, are proclaimed by God Himself.

We, who receive Holy Communion in our Church of the Most Pure Heart, may humbly hope to be admitted into some participation of this joy. He Who was with Mary then is with us now, as really though sacramentally. We might say Dominus mecum, as well as Dominus tecum. Each of us can say: My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God.









THE FIRST DOLOUR

THE SEVEN DOLOURS

EVOTION to the Seven Dolours has been long practised in the Church. The Seven Saints who founded the Servite Order first introduced it into Italy. In Germany it was in general use to make reparation for the heretical outrages of the Hussites. In our own times, when the Servite Fathers came to be our welcome neighbours in London, they found the Devotion already established here through the piety and zeal of our Father Faber. Year after year, the September Feast of the Dolours summons us to the Chapel of our Lady, and each Wednesday night we recite the Rosary of the Seven Dolours. "Blessed are they who mourn"—blessed then are they who meditate upon the Dolours: in the very Meditation they shall find rest for their souls. The things the Dolours record were gone through for our sake; the least we can do is to meditate upon these "ancient mercies."

The presence of Sorrows so overwhelming in the earthly life of Mary is what we should never have expected. Knowing her Child to be the God of bliss, and herself to be Immaculate, we should have looked for nothing but peace and happiness in the life They lived. Yet, once astonishment is overcome, we find it inexpressibly consoling that Our Lady wept tears more priceless than rarest pearls and became the Mater Dolorosa.

Reflect that these Sorrows of His Mother bring home to us the human side of our Saviour's life. He came not in the triumphal brightness of the "journeys of His eternity"—like the exultant sun driving athwart the skies—suffering only the brief eclipse of the Passion. He came to be the Man of Sorrows; and though the manner of His birth testified to the Sinlessness and Virginity of His Maiden-Mother, though angelic songs were heard, morning's joy was soon succeeded by evening's weeping; clouds gathered, and thenceforth were never lifted from Their life.

The Sorrow has its divisions, and they are called the Dolours of Mary; yet it is one, that is, it is shared between Them—what Jesus felt Mary felt, what Mary mourned Jesus deplored: but the suffering is apportioned to Him, the sorrow to His Mother. And this is in accordance with human nature and the law of life. Compassionate tears reveal the tenderness of the heart of woman; they come with motherhood, and add strange power to the word, and the look, and the clasp of her who has shed them for a son. With that son, the remembrance of his mother's sorrow must be all-powerful!

The earthly life of Jesus and Mary was divine, its glory was hidden, its prerogatives were unused, and it appears in the Gospels as a human rather than a divine life, lowly, holy, simple, and intensely sad. Though we speak of Seven Dolours, we do not thereby limit the number of Mary's griefs; we only group and classify them, to ease the task of seeing if there be any sorrow like unto her sorrow. Thus the earliest years of our Lady must have been saddened by an unrecorded knowledge of the lamentable state

of her own nation, the outer darkness of the world's The idolatries, and still more by meditation on the Messias Seven and His Mother's predicted woes. Often must the Dolours heart of Mary have ached in pity for her whose Sorrow, she read in the Prophecies, was "above all sorrows."

The First of the Seven Dolours is the distinct, startling, official warning and Prophecy made to Mary in the Temple. The Holy Child is presented, and then is laid with gentle kindness and respect in the arms of St. Simeon. The Temple cannot content our infant Great High Priest; He looks from it to a better altar, to the Cross on Calvary; and, speechless Himself. He suggests the words to Simeon, and announces Crucifixion and Dolour by the quivering lips of His faithful servant. He wills not that His sweetest Mother shall hear from His own beautiful lips such words of sad foreboding, and so He lays the melancholy duty on the dear and faithful old man, whom He will recompense almost immediately for the prudent and humane manner in which he discharges his difficult task. And perchance the old Saint has an interior knowledge that in her heart the young Mother already knows all that he now publicly and officially proclaims.

The Second Dolour is soon upon Them in support of Simeon's prophecy. "His own" treat Jesus thus; and His Mother grieves the more, because His people and hers ought to be precisely the last on earth to compel this most painful Flight. It must be a consolation to many of our converts to recall the Flight into Egypt, when they find themselves driven by angered relatives away from home to want and privation, compelled to accept assistance from strangers. But they

are blessed in suffering persecution for justice sake, and they have Fesus.

Next comes the Third Dolour, whose very sorrow is that Jesus is not with Mary and Joseph, but is lost, lost for Three long Days. Any mother's hardest trial—her Boy, her little Boy suddenly disappearing! Her Child, who would grow faint and hungry. This is a sorrow that even the Finding Him in the Temple does not at once dispel; for His explanation is given in words that are mysterious, nor calculated to remove the perplexity and anxiety with which His sad Mother and gentle Foster-Father have "sought Him sorrowing."

The Fourth Dolour pierces the Heart of Mary on the Via Dolorosa. The sight of her Son led forth in company of criminals to a disgraceful death, dragged, beaten, and treated with scorn and contempt as one who was utterly vile—this appalling spectacle sends its sharp sword through the Mother's soul, when her Jesus slowly draws near. She hears His gracious words to the daughters of Jerusalem, and silently adds her blessing to that which He bestows. In no other Sorrow is Mary more grateful for sympathy than in this, unless it be in the last. Ah, there are two in that Via Dolorosa who will ever stand well with Mary—Simon of Cyrene, and St. Veronica.

The Fifth Dolour is most heart-breaking, and must cause Mary herself physical, quivering pain, although she is too horrified to heed it. The Crucifixion is carried out, Jesus is nailed to the Cross. His Mother is close at hand—what she cannot see, alas! she cannot help hearing. When the Cross with its Victim is raised upright, Mary approaches: none dares dispute her right to stand beneath that Cross. And yet how

helpless and powerless she feels! Her prayer for the The dying thief is unavailing; for he impenitently refuses her Seven succour. And for three long hours Our Lady is pierced Dolours with the terrible tortures, the thirst, the distress and compassion of her Son on her account—His desertion by His Eternal Father, His mournful Farewell. And we, His executioners, O Mother of God, dare to implore thy prayers and presence at our own death!

The Sixth Dolour has its horrors, for it brings the wounds of Jesus into closer view, when the dead, stiff, mangled Body is taken down from the Cross and laid across her knees. But a new element enters into this sorrow, the sense of being able at last to rescue and tend her Dear One in this hour of need. Naked came He forth from His Mother's womb, naked and despoiled He returns to her outstretched arms, there to be swathed and sheltered! O all ye who pass by the way, attend and see this Sorrow!

The Seventh Dolour is the Burial of Jesus. Whether it be to earth or to a tomb that we commit the keeping of our dead, it is ever a grief and misery; for we know that unto dust they must and will return. And the pity of it is that we bury them "out of sight." Our Lady knows that she need not fear the approach of corruption to that Sacred Body, still she must deprive herself of Its sight, and by her own act complete the separation between her Jesus and herself. She has to lay Him on His rock-hewn couch—cold Corpse and stone as cold! She forces herself to leave Him, and thus becomes the Mourner of all mourners, thus endures a sorrow she never can forget, thus begins the final period of her lifelong martyrdom.

Jesus has kept His Five Wounds, to show them as

memorials of the sufferings He lovingly underwent for our salvation. In like manner, Mary has kept in her Most Pure Heart the Seven Swords of Sorrow as evidences of what she has undergone, as signs and tokens, to those who mourn, that she is Consolatrix Afflictorum.





THE SECOND DOLOUR

MARY AND THE CROSS

OUR Blessed Lord lives again in His Mystical Body. And it is in the light of this truth that we should regard the history of that Body, which is the Church. Her life is the prolongation or repetition of His own. In her Martyrs His Passion is renewed. In her Apostolic Missionaries His Public Ministry is repeated. In her Religious Orders His Hidden Life is continued. And His Infancy and Childhood, with the admirable, startling virtue then displayed of subjection to His Mother and Saint Joseph, are continued in the love and the devotion of the Church to Mary. We may add that, while there have been seasons and periods in which some of these lives have appeared prominently and some kept out of sight—as there was a period of martyrdom, another of religious vocations, another of missionary zeal—subjection and devotion to Mary has not been limited to any one time; it has been constant, abiding, ever steadily increasing. For those creative words "Behold thy Mother" in each successive generation of mankind summon forth multitudes of children to rise up around her and call her Blessed.

However, there are many different ways of practising devotion to our Lady; and the choice amongst them will be made in accordance with individual character, or because of some allotment of life's joys or sorrows, or because of the Church's guidance, as we experience

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in the Month of Mary and in the Rosary Month. But as every week of the whole year has its Friday, so our Lady beneath that Friday's Cross in her Dolours and Desolation can never be quite forgotten, though probably the majority of us prefer to think of her Joys and her Glories rather than to attend and see her Sorrows. Still, as we pray that the Passion of Our Lord may be ever in our hearts, so let us ever bear in mind the Dolours of Our Lady. Moreover, we have to try to be holy: and, since the Crucifixion, no sanctity is attainable apart from suffering and sorrow, except that of little children. Saints have to carry the Cross after Christ, and the Queen of all Saints walks in the Procession next to her Son. It is then well to be not unmindful of the Sorrows of Mary.

Mary's sorrows were immense, and exceeded all the pains and trials of martyrdom. They were proportioned to her greatness, and her nearness to Jesus, the Man of Sorrow. They were heightened by her enlightenment: our ignorance saves us from many a grief. They were comparable only to her own immeasurable love: they whose love is little have little share in the beatitude of mourning. Mary's Dolours were multitudinous; the Seven are only the chief amongst the number. In the heart of Our Lady lay a sea of Sorrow filled from countless springs and sources. They were miraculous, in that they did not destroy life or reason. They were actual and real, in that they were without exaggeration, and were continuous and distinct.

We may note several peculiarities in the Sorrows of Mary, which strengthen her claim to our most tender sympathy and compassion. They were lifelong. From earliest years the Cross threw its deep shadow over this tender child; she can have hardly ever played or Mary and laughed like others. Her leaving home and parents to the Cross dwell in the Temple was a sacrifice, voluntary indeed, but intensely painful, to the only child of Joachim and Anna. She was saddened by her clear knowledge of the dark idolatry of the world, of the sinful state of her own race, the Chosen People of God. She shuddered to contemplate her prophetic visions of the sufferings of Messias, and wept for His Mother's Woe. These sorrowful impressions did not grow less, as do most of ours, by the lapse of time; if anything, they steadily increased. Little or no sympathy was shown her; and she was silent in her grief. God enabled her to maintain the most marvellous tranquillity, even during the suspense of the Three Days' Loss.

We cannot fathom the depths of the knowledge imparted to Mary by God; if we could, we should find there, surely, like unto a priceless jewel hidden in the innermost recesses of Golconda's mines, the Cross of Christ. We do see it predicted to her, vaguely by the Archangel, clearly and distinctly by St. Simeon. It traces her path in the Flight into Egypt: it was her melancholy mirage on the horison of the arid desert: it came close and stood over her in the Three Days' Loss. Her own gentleness and usefulness, her Child's beautiful littleness avail nothing. The Cross sweeps over all, and Divine Patience has at last a worthy created counterpart in the sublime calm of the Queen of Dolours.

Forget not that, besides for other reasons, they were permitted for our instruction, that we may imitate as much as may be. Forget not that they were permitted in order to excite and ennoble the compassionate feelings of human nature. Unfeelingness should never possess a place in a Christian's heart.

THE MOST PURE HEART AND ITS SEVEN SWORDS OF SORROW

Deluge, so the great Sea of Mary's Sorrows was increased by the fountains of love and grief which broke forth within her heart

under the pressure and anguish of her Divine Son's Passion. Who would dare to say how many times the Sword pierced her soul—who would dare to say by whom that Sword was wielded? We may, however, venture to indicate Seven Sword-thrusts, which must have made deep wounds—wounds that God alone could heal.

The first of the Seven Swords, which we will select for our present meditation on Mary's Broken-heartedness, was her pain and disappointment that she might not die with Jesus—that death should bear away her Life, and inflict on her the pang of parting; that, separated at last and so cruelly, she should be left to linger in exile and bereavement.

Another Sword was that her presence during His Passion, though a consolation to her dying Son, in fact increased His pain. Extreme was the distress of our Lord that so much which was inhuman and unseemly in His manner of death should be inflicted in the presence and sight of His Mother. And Mary had no remedy for this inevitable suffering, of which she herself was the innocent and sorrowful cause.



THE THIRD DOLOUR



A third Sword was her feeling that she was helpless, The Most absolutely, hopelessly unable to prevent, diminish, or Pure Heart alleviate a single pain or suffering that He was enduring, and its Seven

Another Sword was the deadly anguish which her Swords of eyesight and other senses-made exquisitely sensitive by Sorrow sympathy—caused her to feel throughout her whole being. But for miracle, her soul's crucifixion would have invaded her entire mortal frame. Stigmata like those of Assisi and Siena would not have sufficed: every lash, every thorn, every blow would have appeared on that living corpse standing beneath the Cross, saturated with the sufferings of her crucified Son. Great as the sea was her broken-heartedness: tears, hot, salt tears, tears of blood burst from her heart, as though it were filled from the sea of fire and living waters before the throne of God. It is said that the lightning flash, striking a tree and one who stands beneath, will transfer to the body of the dead an exact pattern and copy of the leaves and branches. So does the fire of divine love reproduce in those who shelter in "the shadow of Him Whom their souls love" a true copy of the Tree of Life and its sweetest Fruit. Even an image, an often-handled, a closely-embraced crucifix will work such wonders, when hearts are true and tender. St. Philip knew it, and could not bear to remain long before a crucifix, whose very sight made him shed tears in torrents. In St. Francis on Mount Alverno we have had the prodigy in its full completeness. He saw in the sky a living Seraph of dazzling light, bearing the Five Wounds and the likeness of Jesus Crucified—the sight melted him, the Wounds pierced him as with so many darts of fire, and he became a living image of Jesus Crucified, with the Nails in hands and feet and

the Wound in his bleeding side. If such effects are produced by mere visions and imaginations in those who love Our Lord, what has not been done by the reality to her who stood beneath His Cross, and watched the sweet life of Jesus ebb away, as He sighed and meekly panted, and the Blood oozed from His tortured frame? We have to measure the boundless ocean of her love, we have to remember the sonship and virginal motherhood which united them, while we watch the Sword of Sorrow piercing the Mourner's soul!

The Fifth Sword was the sacrilegiousness of the crime committed on Calvary—the appalling certainty that God Himself in His passible nature was being put to death, that the Author of Life was being slain. This beyond words tortured her holy spirit. She could not forget the song of the Angels at His Birth; and here around her were men and devils howling and shrieking blasphemies while they killed Him. A fearful Sword to pierce one Full of Grace!

A peculiar and especial horror gives prominence to the Sixth Sword. Its wound was that Mary should remain at her post on Calvary, watching, guarding—as she might hope—the Body of the Lord, and yet be unable to prevent the thrust of the Spear, that dastardly outrage on the Corpse of Jesus. Let men say what they will, to have perpetrated this wanton, savage deed in her presence was one of the worst infamies of Calvary.

And the Seventh of these Swords? Oh, infamy worse than Calvary's will be ours if, after pondering these thoughts, after gazing on Jesus and Mary in the Passion, we deliberately commit fresh sins, and in the

foresight of His Mother "crucify again the Son of The Most God!"

Pure Heart

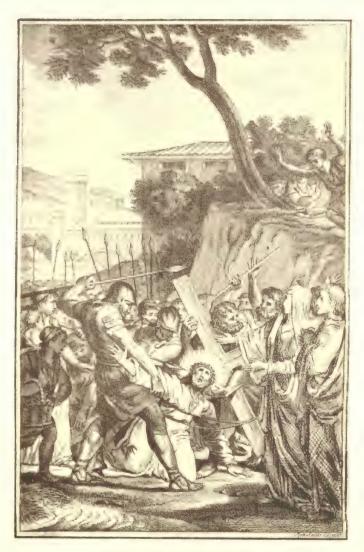
In conclusion, reflect that, without doubt, in her and its Seven mourning Mary is still the Blessed amongst women. Swords of She would not part with the Sorrows to which she Sorrow calls attention, in which she permits the lowliest to share. For well does she know that in this vale of tears the truest, highest love, the most perfect fulfilment of the First Commandment, the Christlike Charity is that which brands the bosom with the Cross, which feeds the flames and intensifies the heat with the "many waters" of condoling grief. Love, even the love of the Most Pure Heart, asks for suffering, insists on sharing the pains of the Beloved, directs the Sword of Sorrow to its aching bosom.

Let the Crucifix, let the Mother of Sorrows soften our hearts, moisten our eyes, and bring us blessed tears! A day will come when the last tear will creep from our dying eye, when the crucifix will be placed in a cold, white hand laid meekly on a breast as cold. Ah, let not that tear be our only tear, let not that grasp of the crucifix be our only embrace! May the Hand of God, even while we live, often wipe away better, holier, sweeter tears, before that day arrives. And then may Jesus and Mary and Joseph comfort us, and bid us enter into the Joy of our Lord!

we live, and move, and have our being," shrouds Himself in our midst with mystery. Not only is He invisible; He has given us

no power by which we can comprehend Him. In truth He is incomprehensible to all except to His own Infinite Self. Unknown He is not: but He is hidden: it is for our advantage that it should be so now, for no man can see God and live. To be inquisitive and over-curious about divine things is irreligious. The humble-minded will be always careful to remember gratefully that the mysteriousness of our Infinite God is in behalf of our feebleness. When He teaches it is in parables, which adapt His eternal truths to our weak intelligence. The greater the mystery, the less as a rule—is there said of it explicitly and plainly. In the Gospels, the dogma of the Blessed Trinity, the dogma of our Lord's Divinity, though frequently alluded to and implied, are seldom distinctly stated. Our Lord spoke to the humble-hearted rather than to the high-minded, and He always rebuked every kind of thoughtless question, and checked irrelevant curiosity. Of many truths He said: You cannot bear them now: and left their promulgation to His Church inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Among these truths, gradually and slowly made known in all its glorious greatness, is that Mystery of



THE FOURTH DOLOUR



God's mercy-His Mother. True it is her clients urge The Mystery that Mary was ever an enemy of her own praise, that of Mary's the Bride of the Holy Spirit prevailed with Him to Martyrdom make but little mention of her name in His inspired Record. Yet this does not seem to be an adequate explanation of the Gospel reticence. It may be added that Mary, in her office and her prerogatives, was also a mystery, and a truth too grand to have been explained and comprehended at once. They who are close to a mountain, who dwell in its sheltering heights, are prevented by their very nearness from beholding its majestic dimensions, its graceful outlines. They may indeed have more than compensation in the pure air and the clear atmosphere; but the view of their mountain is better from the distance. And so the majestic dignity of Mary's divine Maternity was too vast to be seen as a whole by those around and near her; and they have been silent about her greatness, though they felt her influence and called her Blessed. It is those to whom prophetic vision has been granted to see the future from afar, and those who now gaze at her from the distance of intervening centuries, who are able to speak of Mary fully and plainly, and who may hope to find the promised eternal life in her elucidation-Qui elucidant me vitam eternam habebunt.

In the Gospels, little is said of the Joys of Mary, as if her Magnificat suffices, and hardly a word in mention of her Glory; but her Sorrows are not omitted, her grief swells the pathos of the life of our Lord. I think Our Lady was willing that we should contemplate the greatness of her Sorrow, and has invited us to do so, because from the greatness of the Sorrow we can learn the greatness of her love of Jesus, and in a way

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that even her humility would allow. Ah, the history of the Heart of Mary would be incomplete without an explanation of those Seven Swords that pierce it. And we do in fact know far, far more of Mary through her Dolours than through any other Mystery. They attract us strangely, as is ever the case with pain and sorrow. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has its thorny circlet—and which brings tears soonest to our eyes, its flames or those thorns? And which are more noticed in the representations of our artists—the Roses encircling the Heart of Mary or the Seven Swords that pierce it?

We should know much of the Martyrdom of Mary, yet after earnest study on our part, it remains a deep Mystery. With the Prophet we may exclaim: For the affliction of the Daughter of my people I am afflicted and made sorrowful, astonishment hath taken hold on me (Jer. viii. 21). Grieved as was St. Simeon by the foresight of the Sign that was to be contradicted, of Jesus fastened to the Cross, he seemed to be more astonished and dismayed by his vision of the piercing of the heart of Christ's Mother. Her share in the Passion, her presence on Calvary were so startling, so tragical, that the old man faltered in foretelling them. The Mother of the Victim seems to have excited his compassion more than the Victim Himself, and made him change his Nunc Dimittis into a Lamentation.

"Hide not thy wisdom in her beauty," says Holy Writ. This is a distinct encouragement to us to study the Sorrows of Mary, and picture to ourselves some of the plaintive aspects of her beautiful sadness. Firstly, they were ever before her with more or less distinctness. Pondering on the unknown Virgin-Mother of Messias, in the enlightened wisdom of her seraphic spirit she must

have ever felt the most tender compassion for that The Mystery Mother's sorrows. At the AVE of the Angel, she knew of Mary's all, and by her FIAT made them her own. Ah, another Martyrdom Angel might have come, the Angel of the Agony in the Garden, to console and strengthen her, unless Gabriel's Ne timeas was meant for this also. She knew her fate, and still said: Ecce Ancilla Domini. The Fathers of the Church have written that it was a Crucified One Whom she conceived, when she consented to be the Mother of the Man of Sorrows. It was joy; but it was Martyrdom begun. The prolongation of a martyrdom is always reckoned a part of the suffering; no martyrdom ever lasted like Our Lady's. And the longer it lasted, it grew in suffering. From the hour of the Annunciation, the tide of sorrow rose higher and higher within her soul, as the loveliness of Jesus gained upon her. It was so: though the mystery amazes us; for what tears had she to spare for sorrow who so often wept for very joy and love? How grand, how beautiful must be that soul, which in quiet and calm can contain contending feelings of such intensity, and yet lose nothing of its gracious symmetry!

The Martyrdom of Mary was in the soul rather than her senses, it was mental more than physical; although her exquisitely delicate frame quivered, as the strings of a harpsicord when struck by hand or even air-wave. It took place in her soul, for it was because of her Son she grieved, because of Him, and in union with Him—and her soul was in Him—"there where it loved, more than where it lived." Had the Jews wanted to make the Mother of Jesus a martyr they need have done no more. There would have been nothing gained by striking her also as she

stood beneath the Cross. His blows, His pains and thirst, His entire Passion were suffered by her because He suffered them. Ah, who can describe the intensity of this anguish, of this transfixion of her soul? By her presence at the Passion Mary more than merited her title, Regina Martyrum.

Her Son would not deprive her of her crown and her queenly title, although this presence of His Mother was a chief suffering to His tender filial Heart. Above His bodily suffering was the anguish He felt at bringing inevitably upon her this mourning and distress. Still, He well understood that less would not have satisfied her love. And so they mingled Blood and Tears, and welded and linked together suffering and sorrow in one holocaust, one Sacrifice of Redemption. The two Hearts thrilled in condolent unison, cry and echo were indistinguishable, the sorrows were inseparable.

There was mutual sympathy; but in this part of the Passion, unlike the rest, the suffering was Mary's and the sorrow was our Saviour's. He was offering Himself freely and spontaneously: He had eternally thought of this, and chosen it. He was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. Whereas, Mary could only bring a consent—and it seems a harder thing to consent to the death of the innocent, all-holy Victim, than to undergo death, harder the more because she might not also die. When the Machabee Brothers were martyred, the Scripture says: Lastly was slain the Mother. Happy mother! in this more blessed than the Blessed among women—she died with her children. Mary might not die—neither for her Son, nor with her Son.

The further we penetrate into the Mystery, the more do many hearts reveal, with the sanction of

Mary, hidden thoughts. And therefore let us reflect The Mystery that the chief characteristic of the maternal love in of Mary's Mary's Heart was that it was created, controlled, Martyrdom brooded over with ineffable complacency by her Spouse the Holy Ghost. Over that Sea of Sorrow the Spirit of God moved, there He uttered those sighs, those unspeakable groanings of His, as though He borrowed her human heart to transmute His own eternal, infinite love into an almost infinite sorrow. The Heavenly Dove and His Mate the Undefiled mourned and lamented over the rifled Tree of Life.

Who is there who would not weep, who would not exclaim at the sight of the Queen of Martyrs and her Sword-pierced Heart: I am afflicted and made sorrowful, astonishment hath taken hold of me? Hers is the sorrow unlike all others, for she and she alone is the Mother of God, and it is as His Mother that she mourns. Has any mother love for her son such as Mary has? Assuredly no, for it would be idolatry. Assuredly no, for no other mother can ever have a son so beautiful, gentle, obedient and loving as is Mary's. As the love is so is the sorrow. Hers is supreme; her life, love, and loss—all in one—make her Woe personified. Well may her demeanour be calm; for she is in an ecstasy of Sorrow which has deluged and saturated her whole being. Her Sea of Sorrow is immense, beyond the limits of time and space and knowledge, out of sight and hearing of other creatures—the very Angels cannot measure and fathom the depths of this ocean. It rises and broadens. it sweeps onwards and upwards to the throne of the Blessed Trinity: Mary stands near the Cross of Jesus, weeping and mourning in the Name of the Father,

Rosa Son, and Holy Ghost, for the Sufferings and Death of Mystica that One of the Adorable Three to Whom she is Virgin-Mother!

O Queen of Martyrs, forgive and pray for us!





THE FIFTH DOLOUR

THE DESOLATION OF MARY

CHAPTER I.

N Good Friday the Church calls her children to Calvary, and makes them almost witness the Crucifixion of our Redeemer. Her cry: Ecce Lignum Crucis rivets our whole heart, soul, mind and strength on Jesus Crucified. We adore Him; we kiss His Wounded Feet; they are dead, dead to fatigue and torture, dead, alas! to lips that quiver with pity and contrition. The Office ended, we depart; leaving the sanctuary so lone, so desolate, leaving our Jesus hanging dead upon His Cross, and — Unburied! It is true that on Holy Thursday the Body of the Lord is carried in procession to the Sepulchre: but the Victim of the Unbloody Sacrifice is laid according to ritual in a tabernacle rather than a tomb. But the procession of the Presanctified on the Good Friday, ending in the solitary and hastened Communion of the mutilated Mass—this may be taken to represent the hurried Burial of Jesus. Or, perchance, the hiding behind the dismantled altar at Tenebrae of the one white Candle with its unextinguished light may be meant to symbolize the Burial of Jesus. It may be that the Church by all the beautiful confusion in her changed ceremonies humbly records that in the person of her first Twelve Bishops she fled, and failed in her first and most sacred duty. She appears to efface herself and bids us turn to her who "Stood by the Cross of Jesus"-to Mary-

the Bride of Christ acknowledging a fault which was repaired by the broken-hearted love and fidelity of His Mother.

One thing is certain; in spite of the mournful, pathetic Lamentations, and Office of funeral honour to our Divine Lord, who Dead or Living is equally to be adored, there remain an appalling loneliness and emptiness in each sanctuary, an aching void in each heart, and a restless, impatient grief, and to us of the Oratory these things would be well-nigh intolerable but for our recourse to MARIA DESOLATA. Is it because of a closer acquaintance with sorrow, of sharper experience in grief, of gentler and more sobered dispositions, that vear after year her Desolation grows upon us in vaster and more colossal dimensions, as the most stupendous of all the Sorrows of Mary? The vividness of the mystery never fades, it is something more than a narrative of the most intense sadness. As the love with which God loves us has neither beginning nor end, so the love with which we love Him-our love of Jesus and Mary, like His-knows no past, no future, when it meditates. To us the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Desolation of Mary are shown as clearly as though we were actually spectators sad and silent of Calvary's scene of suffering and sorrow.

The Passion was accompanied with portents which protested in creation's name against this consummation of the Crime of Deicide. Darkness covered the face of the earth; it quaked and trembled; the veil of the Temple was rent in twain; rocks were split asunder, fissures opened in the sides of mountains; graves released their prisoners. Affrighted crowds fled from Calvary, leaving their Victim dying on the Cross.

Beneath that Cross, steadfast, immovable, the Mother The of Jesus held her place. None disputed her right, Desolation none ventured to implore her to withdraw. She stood of Mary close to the Cross, so that the sighs of Son and Mother mingled in one sound, like the patient, gentle moan of one poor Victim. She stood beneath the Cross, so that she might answer the last look of grateful love and farewell with which He sought her face. She stood beneath the Cross, that while obeying His Father, bowing down His head towards her, He might "breathe out His soul in the bosom of His Mother."

Jesus was nailed to the Cross at Noon, and at Three He gave up the ghost. The concealments and suspense of those three dread hours ended, and it was evident, when the darkness ceased to cover Calvary, that all was in truth consummated, and only the Corpse of Jesus hung upon the Cross. So the crowd of spectators departed in company with the Centurion's guard, whose leader struck his breast in pity and remorse, and "glorified God."

At last there was peace, though to Jesus it was the peace of death, and to His Mother and her few faithful friends it was "peace that is most bitter." The secret and timid disciples drew near, making amends for the desertion and denial of the rash and boastful. And we also go in spirit to Calvary, because "Jesus our Love is crucified," is lifted up, and is drawing all to Himself and His mourning Mother.

In itself desolation is no isolated and exceptional sorrow known only to the maternal heart of Mary. Our Lady has companions in all who have loved and lost. Where death victoriously assails any stronghold

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of love, and snatches away his prey, he leaves behind him desolation. And as the ruins of a home that has been pillaged and set on fire testify alike to the splendour of the dwelling and the completeness of the destruction, so does the greatness of the desolation in the survivor correspond and testify to the greatness of the peace and love invaded by ruthless death. But the beginnings of desolation precede the actual death of those we love. The mourner's desolation begins before our heart's best treasure has been seized, before the loved one has been borne away from us. The moment that suspense ends, and the ashen pallors of death unmistakably appear—however slowly they may steal and spread—when the certainty strikes the heart of the watcher that the end is coming, that it must be death, inevitable death—then begin the ache and the inward pressure, the terrible pains, and the voiceless heart-moanings of Desolation: while, by one thus oppressed and stifled by restrained sorrow, and "the unseen grief that swells with silence in the tortured soul," the dying must be calmed and cheered with kind and tranquil look and word, the death-parting must be gone through with religious self-control-and with unrefreshing tears must the dead be buried; and afterwards, life, cruel, lonely life be begun again with an almost lifeless heart.

Thus, only ten thousand times worse, was it with Mary in her Desolation, since her Son was lifted up on the Cross not to come down alive. She stood in anguish hour after hour, while death was taking possession of that Sacred Temple of the Body of the Lord which His enemies had so sacrilegiously destroyed. She saw death in His face, so soon as He was lifted

up on the Tree of shame, and appealingly looked The down into a face as deathlike as His own.

Desolation It was desolation to stand helpless and hopeless, of Mary

and watch that ebbing away of the life of her Son, to hear the soft, slow drip of the Life-Blood of God. Quickened with maternal alarm, her ears detected the "Farewell, My Mother!" in His dying accents and the gently-spoken words, "Woman, behold thy son!" Her wistful, startled eyes were not so blinded with blood-stained, bitter tears, but that they saw the contorted limbs of her Child grow stiff and rigid, and the dank dew of death redden afresh the dark blood-garland beneath the crown of thorns. But no language can proclaim her woe, when He cried out: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit — and, bowing His head, into the hands of His Mother commended His lifeless Body!

Amid all the glad signs of happy devotion, often have we knelt adoring and gazing on that same Body of Jesus "white as white wool and as snow," exposed in joy, and light, and peace, to delight us and to delight the dear Lord Himself. But we have forgotten to contrast the bright Service at which we assisted with this first, fearful Exposition of the Most Holy, where the mourning Mother and her grieving attendants are the worshippers of the Divine Body that hangs on the Cross, naked, dishonoured, butchered and lifeless! Think what sorrow above all sorrow to spend two hours of watching that Sacred Body, not clad in Sacramental veils, but stark and cold-not white, except with the corpse's pallor—not beautiful above the sons of men, but, alas! "without comeliness," "as one striken by God," greeted by the plaintive cry of

His Mother's broken heart: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Ah, while Joseph and Nicodemus buy myrrh and winding sheet, let us approach, and "look upon Him Whom we have pierced."

As the dreadful darkness draws away, more and more plainly can we see the pain and agony, the thirst-look in His holy features give place slowly and consolingly to repose and peace. This all hope to see in the faces of their dear dead, and of this at least Mary is not deprived. In spite of disfigurement, the meek majesty of her God re-appears, and the divine beauty, though now so languid and pathetic, of His Sacred Face. Yet her desolation deepens, for she cannot reach that wan, worn face. He hangs high above her, still fastened—and so tightly—to the unbending Cross; and she has none with her but the weeping Magdalen and the other devout women; one man alone is there—the Disciple whom Jesus loved. And Mary longs to bury her Child, to hide Him from His enemies, ready—not without cause—to forfeit the sad solace of gazing on His face. But none is at hand to help. "These arms of mine must be thy winding sheet, this heart, sweet Son, must be thy sepulchre." She has cause to fear. Even while the Mother waits there with yearning heart, Pilate's cruel soldiers return on ruthless errand; and into the scourged and torn breast of Jesus, Longinus thrusts his lance. It is a wanton, cowardly act. He pierces the heart and soul of Mary by the dastardly outrage; but Mary, I think, forgives; as Jesus forgives, as we forgive: because he makes entrance into a very Paradise; and because this—the last and largest Wound—is fairer and more beautiful than the pearly gate of Heaven.

Then, too, it is the signal that His own, if they The are willing, may have Him now, if at last they are Desolation willing to receive Him. At His birth they were not; of Mary but at His death He is accorded somewhat better treatment. He is "lifted up," and draws them to Him. Yes, even the gentle Joseph, the timid Nicodemus become strong and brave, and dare to carry out all they have dared to plan. They mean to take Jesus down from that Cross, and give Him back to His Mother.

They mount the ladder they have procured; and, though horrified and crushed when close to the awful wounds and seams all over the mangled Body, still they are resolute and prompt. In haste for fear of further hindrance, in haste for exceeding reverence, in haste for fear of losing nerve, in haste for the Mother's sake—they drive back and draw out the nails that hold His hands and feet, they detach the Body which is glued to the wood with congealed Blood, and then from the arms of the rugged Cross tenderly and gently they lower Him to Mary's, and rest our dead Saviour's head on the holiest of altars—the bosom of His Mother.

And this also is as it should be. At death, the mother takes precedence of all. To her the wife herself yields, death dissolving her union—sacramental though it be—but maintaining and even deepening the love and the union from the womb between mother and dying child. Ah, Mary is our Mother, as well as His Who lies there dead upon her lap. O Mary, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Be with us then. Without thee, my Mother, I cannot die in peace!

Will Mary speak in this hour of her distress? Her silence is preserved in sadness as it has been in her joy: but the Prophet has already uttered her Lamentation: O all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow: for he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of His fierce wrath. What else but a vintage can the ruin and havoe be called which Mary summons us to see? Against the Tree of Life, like a very hurricane, the fierce anger of divine Justice has beaten, and all the fair foliage is scattered by the storm, the branches are stripped and bare, and the sweet Fruit lies there in her lap all torn and bruised! Was ever wrath so wild, wreck so complete, vintage so devastating and vindictive? The Handiwork of the Holy Ghost, the fair garment of innocent flesh, woven with her consent for the Son of God within her virginal womb, is brought back to her . . . "See, whether it be thy Son's or no." "Drooping," the Prophet saith, "as a tender plant"—crushed, as the trampled "Flower of the field"—down-trodden, as the ripe grape in the wine-press—withered, "as a root out of the thirsty ground"-"there is no beauty in Him nor comeliness." Attend and see! We have seen Him, and there is "no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him." "We have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." We thought it, but only for a moment: we remembered that "He was wounded for our infirmities, He was bruised for our sins." "He was offered, because it was His own will; and He opened not His mouth." Silently, like a lamb was He led to the slaughter, and with utter willingness He died. But, after death,

what say these Wounds? What does that Blood call The out? What says that weeping Mother? Nothing too Desolation hard to bear. After all, she only asks us not to pass of Mary by the way, but to stop, and "attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto her sorrow." She implores us to go out to Calvary, in the gloom of this dreadful evening, and there on the dark hillside, in blessed mercy and pity, to mourn for Him, to help her to shroud Him, and at least make the place less lonely, the desertion less total, the ruin less universal! The Mother of mercy pleads for mercy! Nay, the God of mercy Himself appeals for it! His winding-sheet must be an alms, His Sepulchre must be borrowed! "The foxes have their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head," and sleep His last sleep! Veriest Victim of poverty, Mary shows her Son all naked-who will clothe Him? She shows that He is dead—Ah, who will bury Him? Need we fear? Need we dread reproaches? She utters none, she makes no complaint, she only laments and mourns. She tells her sorrow, and asks for us to share it. "See, my children, your Lord and Master! See how He loved you. Count, if count you can, these bleeding wounds. They are without number, and yet with one voice they all speak—not of wrong, nor injury, nor cruelty, nor pain—they speak of love alone. Every mouthed wound with its ruby lips calls out in the name of a love that is 'stronger than death.' To that ecstatic love they only seem like red roses which you have given Him for love. These Five largest He will keep for ever, fair and fragrant, and as love-tokens—for, when asked about them, He will only say: I was wounded

with them in the house of those who loved me! His last look, my children, was one of love, and its light still lingers beneath these lids. His last words were words of love, and these parted lips seem to repeat them still. His heart broke with love. These arms of His even I, His Mother, have not moved: He keeps them open, wide open even now, to invite you all to peace and pardon! And thus in my bosom—Oh, so heavy, sad, and forlorn!—your Divine Love lies bleeding: and as for me, I hear that Blood of mine Only One speaking to me 'better things than the blood of Abel.' 'Mother,' it whispers, 'Mother, forgive them: My Mother, love them—they knew not what they did.' Oh, how Thou hast loved Thy enemies, my Son, my King, my God!"

All these things Mary ponders in her heart, with the dear dead Body laid across her knees. The thorncrowned head rests on her left arm; with her right hand she gently puts back from His gracious features the long, blood-clotted hair; and helped by the others disentangles and removes the cruel crown. Her tears fall fast: she thinks of the lilies of Nazareth with which He let her crown Him in the joy and adoration of those days of her youth and His lovely childhood. All the last offices, so far as place and time permit, are rendered. With myrrh and aloes they try to close those many wounds, while she herself stanches the one still bleeding in His riven side. The fingers that fastened His swaddling clothes now fold His shroud: nor do they falter more in grief than then they failed in gladness; albeit, alas! they are now tinged with the Precious Life-Blood of her Jesus. Only now her harp of joy is silent, and she repeats within her

desolate heart the saddest psalms of her ancestor, and The the prophet's lamentations. . . . "The Lord is my Desolation portion, saith my soul"—in truth, He was her life of Mary and soul!—"therefore will I wait for him. The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of man. It is good for a man, when he shall have borne the yoke from his youth. He shall sit solitary, and hold His peace, because He hath taken it upon Himself. He shall rest in Thy Tabernacle, in Thy holy mount." When all that can be done is done, He is borne in mournful procession; and she who with Joseph laid Him in the manger, now, aided by another Joseph, lays Him in the tomb. All is done calmly, with reverent composure, though tears fall in torrents, and she is in ecstasy of grief. Beside Him she places the Nails, the Crown, all the Blood-stained instruments of His Passion, with forgiving kisses. Why not? Never more will they hurt Him: and they, at least, knew not what they did. The grieving assistants feelingly withdraw, and Mary is alone with her Jesus. The poor veiled Mother bends between those outstretched arms, and kisses the cold pale lips with lips as white and cold. Thus in the Cave of Bethlehem began and in the Cave of Calvary end the holiest, most tender maternal ministrations and caresses that ever were or could be. There are given to God Incarnate the first and last kiss Mary by maternal right is entitled to bestow, her first and last embraces. dear to His filial love and subjection alike in life and death. But at Bethlehem was "the morning gladness," at Calvary abides "the evening weeping." Mary falls upon her knees, adores her Dead God, and—comes forth.

They roll a large stone to the entrance, and close the tomb; they worship in silence except for sighs and sobs. Sad Angels light up the stars above, as sanctuary lamps for the Sacred Sepulchre: night lends her sombre pall: garden flowers send forth their faint evening fragrance around this altar of Christ's Body: and through the dark cypresses, the sighs of the night wind make softest and most mournful requiem music.

It is written in the Prophets, "His Sepulchre shall be glorious:" and already is the prediction fulfilled. For the Compassion of God has over-ruled man's would-be contempt and cruelty. Leave has been given for Christ's burial. But the conditions and circumstances seem to make it hurried and secret, near the place of execution, like that of any poor criminal. Yet the rich and noble are there, and the greatest and holiest of God's creatures, the one most acceptable to our Lord—His Own Virgin Mother-herself performs the rite. Justly does St. John exult because the Word of Life has been seen and heard and handled with our hands: but the touch of no priest, however sanctified by the grace of the Holy Ghost, has ever been so acceptable to Jesus as hers who composes His sacred limbs for burial, and so completes the Sacrifice of the Cross, which is hers as well as His. Thus laid to rest by His Mother, He exclaims: In pace in idipsum, dormiam et requiescam. "The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord;" but He Who is "free amongst the dead" exclaims: Thou hast turned my mourning into joy, Thou hast cut my sackcloth, Thou hast loosened my shroud, and compassed me with gladness. Yet the Mother sighs: His abode is in peace, and His repose in Holy Sion:—but: in peace is my bitterness most bitter.





THE SIXTH DOLOUR

THE DESOLATION OF MARY

CHAPTER II.

EATH is not desolation, but only its commencement; nor yet is burial, this is only its progress. When mourners must tear themselves from the grave, and go back to an estranged world, to a tenantless abode, and distasteful duties—distasteful because discharged by them instead of the dear ones departed—then desolation is complete, and begins to be intolerable. Repugnance, despondency, misgivings, if not despairthese are the phantoms which haunt this wilderness of woe, which alarm the poor pilgrim passing through desolation's desert. Then do the mourners feel with deepest pang that it is not the dead who leave them, but that they are compelled to desert the dead in favour of the living. And this grief also comes to Mary, when the stationing of sentinels at the Sepulchre forces her to withdraw. Pity her, defenceless, widowed, Childless Mother, denied the privilege—nay, the right of the meanest mourner, and robbed even of her Dead!

Whither shall she go? Is it not all one? Oh, see her unclasp those aching, weary hands, and stretch them so meekly, so piteously to the compassion of her Heavenly Father! "He hath made me desolate... He hath spread a net for my feet, He hath turned me back... He hath blocked up my way with square stones. Yea, and when I cry and entreat, He hath shut

out my prayer." See those imploring hands, "dripping with myrrh," those fingers stained with myrrh and aloes and Blood! Ah, Mother! the "uplifting of thy hands," in this bitter woe, is "the Evening Sacrifice" of this Day of Atonement. "While the King is at His repose"—while thy Jesus sleeps in death, thou, Queen of Sorrows, must watch, and, like the sweet, crushed spikenard, send forth sweet odours—sighs and moans from thy Sword-pierced bosom!

Whither can she go? I ask, "If," away from the Sepulchre, "the rebellious earth have any resting for her true King's Queen"? She is worn out with grief and suffering, languid with fatigue and fasting, her quivering lips are parched with thirst, and smart too with wounds from the thorny crown. Her beautiful eyes, those merciful eyes of hers are swollen with the tears of her terrible weeping, tears of blood that tinge her poor, pale face! She betakes herself where all mourners should find their way-she goes back to the Cross. Empty though it is, like herself "made a vintage of," still it is the Tree of Life to all others by having been the Tree of Death to Jesus. The pale Paschal moon shines down, and shows it to the Mother with its great wide arms, and on it glistens the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God.

The exhausted Mother has made her way to the Cross on the summit of Calvary. Tall and haughty, it gleams against the dark sky beyond. Again Mary stands beneath the Cross: but she is like a poor wounded bird that has fluttered to the foot of the tree where her young have been taken, and her nest destroyed. O Tree of Life! canst thou afford no comfort? Is it not through her that glory and renown are to be

thine henceforth for ever? Is it not to her that thou The must give thanks for all thy victories? For it is Mary Desolation who on thee has made restitution for the theft of Eve of Mary from that other tree. The hour of Thy exaltation is hardly come, and never shalt thou exult over this bereaved Mother. The Flower with which thou hast blossomed is hers, not thine. The Fruit which the Lord has gathered from thee is the Fruit of her virginal womb. The Flower is crushed, the Fruit is bruised, because of the stiffness of thy stubborn boughs! But hush! It is not for those who crucified Jesus to reproach the Cross which they themselves prepared. And these thoughts are not the thoughts of Mary. Although it is saturated with the Life-Blood of her Son, she gives to that Cross the kiss of peace. But her Desolation deepens. The Cross itself looks desolate parted from Jesus of Nazareth; its aspect makes Mary still more realize her own separation from her Divine Son. "In death they were not divided" has its special significance to loving hearts. Therefore, until her Heart with its Swords of Sorrow is released from ache as was the Sacred Wounded Heart, until she is united with Jesus in death as well as in life, her Desolation will and must endure. "The Comforter, the relief of her soul, is far away," and already she knows how many weary years must pass till Jesus comes.

There is strength if not comfort for Mary in that Cross. She lingers here, far from home—nay, home she has no longer, but why remain here, unsheltered on the bleak, gloomy mountain? Ah, she fears to retrace the Via Dolorosa. Sorrow-laden, she must reach some place to mourn in yonder dark, sullen City. She fears to pass through the streets, where only this morning she

followed Jesus carrying His Cross, she fears to pass the doors of the dwellings where the voices of His murderers may still be heard, harsh and relentless. All this she fears: but more than all she fears the eyes, the hard, unfeeling eyes, that will watch her, those unpitying, "terrible eyes," that made Jesus grateful even for the kind word of a dying thief! Yes, Mary clings to the Cross rather than face the world she knows so well. When He first "came unto His own, His own received Him not;" at His birth Bethlehem was most cruel, and now Jerusalem is pitiless and cruel in His death. Only a few days ago, her Son shed tears over the City, because of its heartless rejection: can we wonder that Mary shudders, as she turns from the Cross, compelled to re-enter that cruel City now crouching gloomily at her feet?

Conscience compels us to confess that our share in the Sorrows that pierced our Lady's soul is undeniable, and lays on us the duty of revealing the thoughts which come to us from giving the attention she implores. And therefore I cannot refrain from dwelling longer on the worst cruelty of the Passion of Jesus, which cannot be excluded from the Desolation of Mary.

Our own reason and self-knowledge, exploring the dark realms of the human heart perverted and far from its Creator, discover depths of ignominy, capabilities of evil, enough to cause loathing and despair: while Faith reveals horrors and possibilities of guilt still more appalling. But Faith and Reason point alike to one passion as more than all others disgraceful and repulsive—human cruelty. The worst accusation, the reproach most dreaded is that of being cruel. God Himself—so seldom reproachful—says with fearful

meaning: The daughter of My people is cruel. The And Jesus—so uncomplaining—at the wanton cruelty Desolation of the first blow He received, exclaimed: Why of Mary strikest thou Me?

It is positively sickening to think how completely this crime of cruelty can take possession of human nature. Weakness is cruel. Even the child, in spite of littleness, youth, and happiness, will turn its very sportiveness into ingenious cruelties. The woman, in spite of sex, gentle manners, culture, will turn the very delicacy of her tastes and instincts into refinements of inhuman conduct. The dancing daughter of Herodias will gaily carry the bleeding head of the Baptist to the boudoir of her delighted mother! Strength is cruel. Yes, and in the strong, cruelty too often arouses other savage passions into which they fiercely plunge. The songs of birds will cease, when the scream of the dove is heard, as it flutters in the talons of the hawk: often in the pitying ear of night ascends the shrill death-note of some poor animal seized for food by the beast of prey. But how often, Oh, how often, in this very City, the cry of some poor, hapless, human victim has shrilly rung out unheeded in the silence of the night, has been drowned in the heartless hum of pleasure and riot, while strong, remorseless cruelty completed its ferocious deed!

Yet, while I believe that, since Cain slew his brother, more crime and worse crime has been committed by mankind through cruelty than any other vice, I maintain that the greatest and most atrocious cruelty ever perpetrated is the Crucifixion of Jesus in the presence of His Mother.

I invoke the testimony of heaven and earth that

the worst of all cruelty is to outrage maternal love—a love so unselfish, so sublime, implanted by the Creator as the noblest natural instinct of living creatures. Even wild animals will let themselves be captured rather than give up and desert their young. God abominates such cruelty, and expressly forbids it. "If thou find, as thou walkest by the way, a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the dam sitting upon her young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take her with her young" (Deut. xxii.) God extends His own immediate protection to the maternal instinct. In Leviticus (xxii.) God says: The mothers shall not be sacrificed the same day with their young ones. And to show His detestation of another crime, God compares it to this cruelty. He that offered sacrifice of the goods of the poor is as one that sacrificeth the son in the presence of his father (Eccus. xxxiv.)

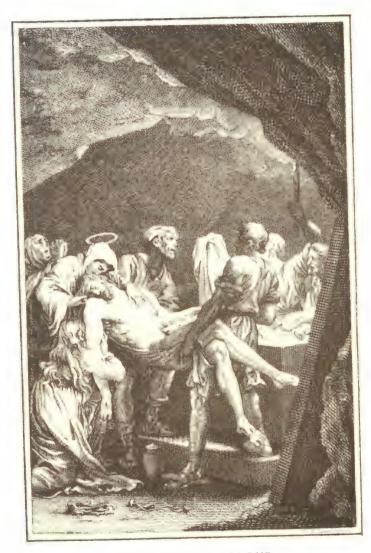
This holy law, this merciful decree of Divine Tenderness was defied and brutally broken on Good Friday. We wretches took the Son, dragged Him bleeding and faint to Calvary, and with our Victim we were met by the Mother. The heavy Cross He was bearing crushed Him with its weight, and we jeered when He fell to the pavement at her feet. Calvary, we stripped off His garments, and His Mother beheld the scourged and mangled flesh. "Her Nazarite was whiter than snow, purer than milk, ruddier than golden ivory, fairer than sapphire." What she then saw was a livid Leper! And then He was hidden from her, because at our bidding He meekly placed Himself upon the Cross. But worse than sight was it to hear the strokes of that ceaseless hammering, driving nail after nail, like bolts, through quivering flesh into

the stubborn wood. Again she beheld Him, stretched The and distended on the uplifted Cross, the Wounds in Desolation hands and feet of sensitive flesh lacerated and enlarged of Mary by the weight of the Crucified Body. Then she drew near and stood face to face, looking up into the drooping, anguished countenance. Was it partly in mercy to her that God sent the three hours of darkness—to hide somewhat the oozing and sprinkling of Blood, the heaving chest, the quivering throes of pain throbbing in each agonized limb? And yet there rang out unrepressed that all-proclaiming cry, so terrible to a mother's bosom, "I thirst!" In the presence of His Mother, He was insulted with jeers: "Vah, let Him come down from the Cross" was the blasphemous jeer of the crowd and the high priests. They derided Him, mocked His tortures, gloated over His sufferings. Mary saw Him wince in hurt amazement at the unmanly, wicked cruelty. Hardest of all for her was the sight of His Sacred Heart grieving because of her grief, slowly breaking as the moment of parting drew near, and they began in the darkness to drift apart—He unto Death, and she unto Desolation. The Son was sacrificed in the presence of His Mother: the Lamb of God was "seethed in His Mother's milk:" the Mother herself was "sacrified on the same day with her Child!" Nor was this all. Contemptuous cruelty was not deterred by her presence, but insulted before her even the Dead. The Lance was thrust home! And perchance further outrages would have been perpetrated, had not Divine Mercy interposed, that His Mother might bury Him in peace.

The consequence of all this cruelty is plainly to be seen, as Mary stands in ecstasy of woe beneath the

Cross to which she has returned. That Cross is deprived of its priceless Burden, but it remains enriched and decorated with "the precious Blood of the spotless Lamb." So we may well expect to find here the crucified Mother of Christ. Crucified? Ah, yes. If St. Francis, St. Catherine, St. Rose—if so many of the pure and tender-hearted, when they contemplate the Passion, receive the Stigmata, and are called Addolorati—is not Holy Mary also crucified by Compassion, the horrified eve-witness of her own Divine Son's murder, who exclaims in her lonely desolation: My sorrow is above all sorrow, my heart mourneth within me! Instead of hearing it from others, who would try to soften each dreadful detail, instead of discovering His sufferings from the state of His Body when it was restored to her with its countless wounds, she has actually seen all, shared all, felt for Him the thrust of the Lance, and now continues alone "the evening Sacrifice." Though the Scourge, the Crown, the Cross, the Nails which crucified the Son's flesh, tortured only the heart of the Mother, shall I not call that Mother also Crucified? There is no other word. "To what shall I liken thee, to what shall I compare thee, O Virgin Daughter of Sion," except to Jesus Christ, "and Him Crucified"!





THE SEVENTH DOLOUR

THE DESOLATION OF MARY

CHAPTER III.

ARY has received the strength to quit the Cross, and reach the shelter to which she is guided by St. John in fulfilment of the sacred trust confided to the Disciple whom Jesus loved. Will she also have strength to discharge the duties which desolation imposes—strength to live through this night of woe?

Firstly, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus must be dismissed with gentle and grateful words, perchance like those of David to the men of Jabes Galaad . . "Blessed be ye to the Lord, who have shown this mercy to your Master and have buried Him: and now the Lord will render you mercy and truth, and I also will requite you, because you have done this thing."

Next, she listens to, and pardons, and gently consoles Peter and the rest, who, cast down and ashamed, steal hither to confess their cowardice, and bewail their fault at her feet whom they have already learned to look on as the Mother of Mercy.

Her own dear and brave companions are most lovingly bidden to sleep and take their rest; she tells them that she will watch in their name, while mourning and weeping in her own.

And so this awful night is begun: and Mary spends it in an agony of grief, an abyss comparable only to the abyss and Agony of Gethsemani. The

sternest of the Prophets has given it the most plaintive Lamentations. "How hath the Lord covered with obscurity the Daughter of Sion! Weeping she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all that were dear to her. . . From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath chastised me. My sorrow is above sorrow; my heart mourneth within me. My heart is turned within me, for I am full of bitterness."

No sorrow is like this sorrow: her broken-heartedness is great as the sea. Can we measure the height, and the depth, and the breadth of His love, for Whom this Mother weeps? We cannot, nor can the Angels of God. Neither can we, nor can the Angels ever sound the unfathomable abyss of woe which we call the Desolation of Mary. For she has not only maternal love for her God, but also a corresponding maternal sorrow. She weeps for her God, she laments her Beloved One: like her Maternity, her Sorrow has an infinity of its own.

Yes, they are parted, who were all in all to one another. She was His, His Only One, His Beautiful, Immaculate, eternally-chosen Mother. And He was "hers, and hers she loved, and hers she blessed." . . . "Bring me a mother who so loved her child," "whose joy in him is overwhelmed like hers." . . . "Measure her woe the length and breadth of this!" They are divided. He is dead, and she is left behind. He is again gone from her on His Father's business, and she is turned back. The very thief may be with Him in Paradise, but she must live on in lonely desolation. "Therefore do I weep, and mine eyes run down with water, because the Comforter, the Relief of my soul

is far away!" But she is calm. Yes: yet let us not The be deceived by that calm and sublime attitude, by Desolation her gentle gesture of holy resignation. There is of Mary majesty in her demeanour, because she is Queen of Sorrows: but who does not know how some pains and sorrows pass all rules of grief, how, even sad, wan smiles—meant to hide—most reveal the heart's worst wound, the soul's saddest secret?

It is only when some great grief afflicts us that we come to learn how tender in His mercy is God Who has divided our time into day and night. Only those who have mourned can tell how blessed, how desirable are the stillness, the silence, the obscurity of night. For it is then that the Comforter visits us; then our Father Who is in heaven comes to us, and whispers of pardon; listens while we pour out through the long hours our confession of sin, and shame, and sorrow; and He gives His unseen alms of pity and compassion. The pillow is drenched with tears; but at last they cease, our sobs are hushed, for He does not disdain to wipe away the tears and soothe us; and the last of the sorrow is that, like wearied children, we are leaning on Him "Who giveth His loved ones sleep!"

But with Mary it is not so this night. Others sleep and take their rest, her Jesus Himself sleeps in the distant garden-tomb. But Mary watches. "Love hath chased sleep from her enthralled eyes, and made them watchers of her own heart's sorrow." An awful night of anguish is before her, one long agony in which her spirit yields to an ecstasy of woe, is submerged in the abysses of her Sea of Sorrow.

It is appalling to think how even her bodily

senses must have suffered during the mental agony. All through the endless hours, her ears were tingling with echoes of cruel scoffs and wicked blasphemies, and the stillness of the Torture Chamber made the sound of them the louder. Then, hour after hourkeeping time stroke after stroke with the beatings of her heart-she heard echoes of the dull blows of the heavy hammer nailing Jesus to His Cross. At intervals a still more startling sound was heard. It seemed His very voice. "Open to Me, My Mother, My Love, My Dove, My Undefiled; for My head is full of dew and My locks of the dews of night!" It was but the night-wind sighing outside the house of mourning. In like manner was her sight afflicted: darkness gave no relief to her aching eyes. They were enthralled: upon that darkness appeared a vivid Vision—the cold, marble-like Body with its gashes and opened Sidethe wan, meek face—the closed eyes, hidden behind those livid lids. If she shuddered and shut her own, alas! "at home there was death alike:" she beheld Him Whom she had left in the garden-tomb lying dead and buried within her own heart! Yes, Mother! Thou thyself wast the Enclosed Garden, thy spotless Virginity the "New Sepulchre," thy dazzling sinlessness His snowy Shroud, thy Dolours and Compassion the choicest myrrh and aloes!

But this Mother suffered from this inward, vivid representation of her Dead more than by possibility any other woman could. That presence of Jesus in her poor heart was an aggravation of woe which she alone could experience: for it forced her to realize how completely her Son was dead, and to herself dead as no other son could die to a mother. When

we stand at the grave of some departed friend, we The know that he himself is not there. Something is there Desolation in the consecrated ground that never was himself of Mary precisely. The name we murmur is acknowledged not by the unconscious Dust, but by that which has "returned to God who gave it:" our dead is not in the grave but with God. Mary's Dead Son, however, is not gone away. He is still there. Jesus is in the Sepulchre. He lives not, it is true: He laid down His life in actual reality when He expired. But St. John again and again calls the Body of the Lord which he helped to bury by the Sacred Namethus, for instance, "There, therefore, because of the parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand" (Jo. xix. 42). The Body of itself can use no sense or faculty: it is most really dead: its Soul absolutely quitted it, and went to the Limbus of the Fathers—"He descended into hell." And yet as truly we can say, He is in the Tomb: because One and the Same loving, intelligent, Divine Person is not only united to, and therefore with the Soul of Christ, but is also united to, and therefore with the Body of Christ. The same Union is maintained between the Divine Person and the Precious Blood; and in consequence Soul and Body and Blood of Christ are to be adored with supremest adoration always and everywhere. It is He Who for three and thirty years has called Mary His Mother, has loved her filially, and lived in subjection to her. And now, because she knows Who and What He is, she feels that He is gone and yet not gone; and this His presence is worse than absence, since He gives not the faintest recognition of her love that is

"stronger than death," that is able to bear even this Desolation. Although her heart and spirit are so stamped with the Vision of Jesus Dead that the imprint of the Sacred Host on the heart of St. Juliana can have scarcely been more vivid, still He gives not the faintest token of His presence, of the indestructible Hypostatic Union—"At home there is death alike!" Such a presence must be a thousand times worse to bear than the absences which make us pine.

And here we may well pause to think how majestic is that Motherhood which death has assailed in vain, and only to set forth more plainly its dignity and greatness. For the Soul of Jesus, away about the business of His Father, still calls her Mother, and the Body of Jesus in the Tomb still claims her as Mother—aye, even while saying: My Father and Mother have both forsaken me. The Word Who has made Himself her Son is united to them equally in death as in life. And so her Motherhood remains uninjured, unsuspended. O mighty Mystery, containing in itself both life and death! Marvellous union of Jesus and Mary! Death cannot sever it: nor will eternity deepen it; for never, in joy, sorrow, or glory will that Son leave His Mother's heart!

And now let us consider the part of her Desolation which was the saddest to our Lady, though it is the most consolatory to us poor sinners. Her consent, first implied in the Fiat of the Incarnation, was renewed when Jesus from the Cross said to her: Behold thy son: once given, it was never retracted. Full of grace she showed herself to be by her sublime generosity, and by her self-sacrifice she proved her oneness of spirit with the Lord Who was with her, though, for our sakes, to

make her suffer. It was in her Desolation that the The Mother of God became the Mother of Men, so effectively Desolation that we took our place in her broken heart more like of Mary substitutes for Jesus than His adopted brethren, partakers with Him in her maternal love. Were all like St. John, the exchange even then would be hard; but "many are the children of the Desolate," as the Refuge of Sinners well understood, and soon experienced.

God has made this Mystery an integral part of the plan of our Redemption. We were His enemies, being slaves of sin and death. But God so loved the world as to send His Only-begotten Son into the world, that for His sake we might be made instead of enemies the adopted sons of God. Adam made us enemies, Christ makes us children of God. In his fault and Fall Adam was not alone, nor was Christ alone in expiation. Eve stood beneath the Tree of Death, and Mary stood beneath the Tree of Life. Proportioned to their powers, punishment and penalty were decreed and inflicted upon Adam and Eve. Christ and His Mother, the New Adam and the New Eve. suffered all that the Atonement and the payment of the penalty involved. Our Redemption involved Christ in all the horrors of Crucifixion; for St. Paul tells us that crucifixion is the appropriate punishment of concupiscence. Therefore Christ died for us on the Cross "in the body of sin." Adam's fault was more than repaired; and a thousand graces abound where sin ran wild. And now, what was Eve's sentence, Adam's associate in guilt, his partner in punishment? It was this: "I will multiply thy conceptions, in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." We, who are born to the life of grace in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, look round for a Mother in that life of

grace. There must be one; for a man and his children may live together in one house, but unless the mother is there, or the memory of her, that house will not be a perfect home, nor will they form a complete family. Adam foresaw who would be that Mother, and he "called the name of his wife Eve, because she was to be the Mother of all the living." Ah, he was prophesying. In that hour he saw not so much the partner in his sin, not the woman by whose conceptions death was to be bequeathed to mankind, but in spirit he saw before him in the future the Woman who should crush the head of his deceiver, the Associate of his Redeemer, the Eve of Life, the Mother of all the living. He was prophesying that word of Jesus which made her what it called her: Woman, behold thy son . . behold in John the countless generations whom thou dost adopt, who will call thee Blessed and their Mother. Thus while Jesus performs the penance of Adam, Mary undertakes that of Eve. In sorrow Eve was to bring forth her children, and therefore is Mary Desolate. Those born of the Blood of Jesus cannot but compel the tears of Mary. She who shares with the Eternal Father in the joy and bliss of being parent of a sinless, infinitely spotless Son, whose Birth is happiness unalloyed, must share with poor Eve in the sorrow of being the Mother of Mankind. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars: and being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered" (Apoc. xii. 1). Jesus Himself is the Sun who clothes her, we are those children of her Sorrows, her Benonis, as poor Rachel named her last, the children of her pain. O children of the Desolate! "Forget not the travails of your Mother; The remember that you had not been but for them." Desolation Had all the children of the first Eve been like her of Mary

holy Abel, hers would have been a happy motherhood, but her life was plunged into sadness by the wickedness of cruel Cain. And in the Maternity of Mary the like bitterness is found, deepening the darkness of her desolation. Sinners, Cains, and worse than Cain, are to be seen in the generations given to her by God Who loves them, and still receives no answering love. As we treat our Father in heaven, so do we treat the Mother of Mercy. I have said that amongst her children worse than Cain may be found. No more terrible instance can occur than the one recorded in the Gospels. Let us go for a moment to another spot, to a garden more deserted and darker than even that of the Sepulchre. We go in search of one who came not back to Mary with the rest--in itself an evil omen. The garden lies in a weird, marshy hollow: a solitary, half-leafless tree is slowly withering above the rank, coarse weeds. From a branch, blacker than the night, hangs by the neck—Dead Despair! It is Judas, the traitor, Judas, one of the chosen Twelve, whose Oueen is Maria Desolata! That hideous face was touching the face of Jesus only last night: those hard, false lips gave Him the last kiss He received ere He died! Nay, God knelt last night to that man who has destroyed himself soul and body, knelt and washed those stiffening feet, let His long hair fall over them, and kissed them lovingly, speaking to the traitor's heart interior words of melting remonstrance! So did the heart of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, follow even this lost and cruel wretch to the last, praying

for him, calling to him to the very end, till his desperate soul plunged madly away from all mercy into the lurid darkness of hell.

And what are all who sin but his accomplices? Those who sin, according to St. Paul, renew the horrors of calvary, "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery." We kill our own soul when we sin. True, but in doing this we also crucify Jesus. He died for the sin that perhaps even now lies on our soul, as much as He died for the other sins of the whole world. Listen, then, to the Word of God. "Say not, I shall be hidden from God and who shall remember me from on high? In such a multitude I shall not be known, for what is my soul in such an immense creation!" All can, too many do sin, and sin grievously. The weak can sin, the child, the woman: any man, woman, or child can crucify again to themselves the Son of God. Think what St. Philip used to say. . . "If Thou help me not, O my Jesus, I shall fall. Each morning, taking the chalice into his hands, he would say: Lord, beware of me, and help me, or else I shall do all manner of evil against Thee!" .. "The Wound in Thy Side, O my Christ, is large; but if Thou do not hinder me I shall make it larger."

With God nothing is impossible or difficult. His words are creative: and in such words did He confer on Mary the Maternity of which I treat. But these miracles are performed mysteriously, and we must be cautious when we attempt to describe them. Remembering the Vision vouchsafed to St. Benedict, as related by St. Gregory, I think that without irreverence or rashness we may believe that in a

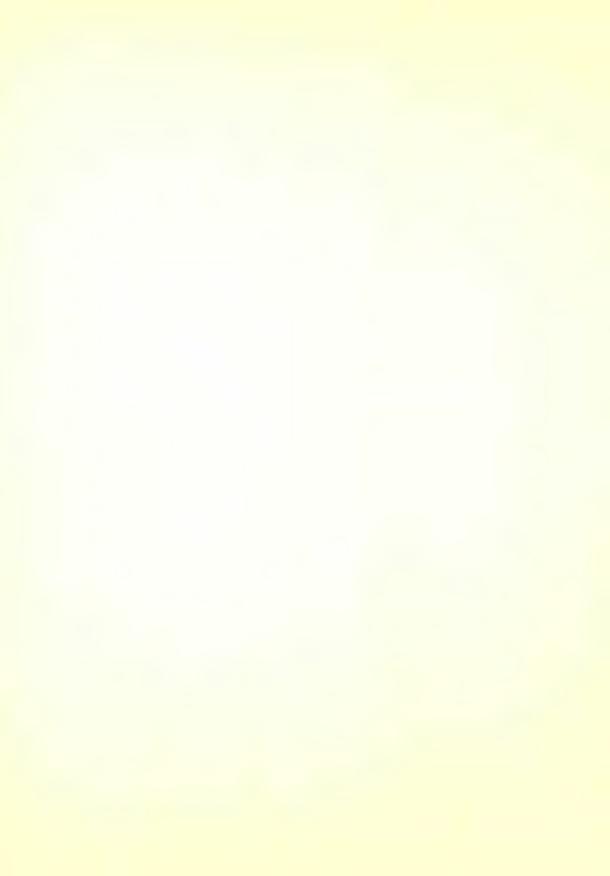
similar manner the spirit of Mary during the long The watches of the night of Desolation had some prophetic Desolation sight of her future children. Certainly it would seem of Mary to be suggested by the appeal of Jeremias in his Lamentations: "Arise, give praise in the night, in the beginning of the watches; pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands to Him for the life of thy little children."... (Lam. ii. 13). In thought, then, and imagination, I see the whole human family, the dead, the living, the unborn generations, gather silently in sight of her spirit, and people the shadowy darkness around the Desolate. She beholds us all; surveys us singly and separately. She sees each one's character and destiny, peruses the features and knows the name of each; not only the nations and their histories collectively, not only the Church and her vicissitudes, the multitudes perishing in multitudes by unbelief and apostasy; but she sees, as such a Mother would be enabled by God to see, each one's heart and soul, his sins, his efforts, and his weakness. And with that intimate knowledge, she keeps her promise, and takes us in the place of Jesus! Heroic in purpose, overcoming nature's repugnance to what is loathsome, holiness's fear of what is foul, though her soul is sorrowful even unto death, the Refuge of sinners opens her arms to shelter us, and lifts up her hands for the life of her little children!

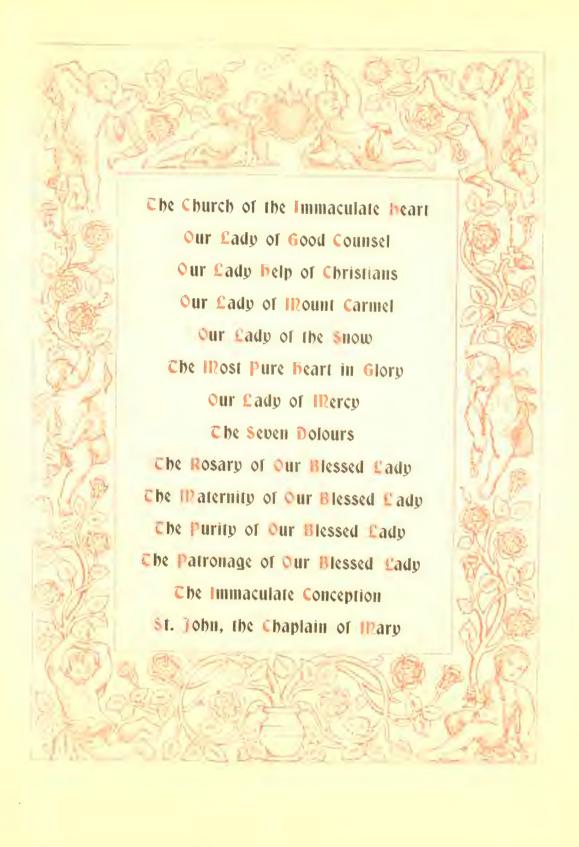
But can Mary own us? Can Mary love us who have crucified her Jesus? We read that at Padua in Italy it once mischanced that one student killed another. He took refuge with a widow, to whom he confessed the crime. Scarce had he ended, ere they brought to the

very house the murdered youth, and gave to the widow her only son killed by one for whom justice was keenly searching. She screened the guilty murderer, sheltered him from the officers of justice, forgave him—only asking that he should repent, be converted and serve God! That Italian woman had learned the lessons of Calvary and the Cross. We feel that her soul with its forgivingness must have greatly pleased the Sacred Heart of Him Who has by word and example taught us to forgive. And thou, Mother of Christ, hast the same Christlike spirit, and thy forgivingness has been the wonder and the joy of the Angels of God over sinners doing penance, and finding thee to be their unfailing Refuge. "Posuit me Desolatam"--"He hath made me Desolate:" that is true; and we know that it was for our sakes. We see thee standing with those outstretched arms of thine, and we understand the infinite pathos and meaning of thine attitude. Thou art not asking that Jesus may be restored, but art calling on us, even us, to come, as though we were the Disciples whom Jesus loved, to whom He left thee, that thou mightest be our Mother. Because I have wounded thee, thou, my Mother, wilt not love me less. Because I am weak and sickly, thou wilt lavish gentleness and care. Ah, Oueen of Sorrows! lift up thy hands for the life of thy little children, that we who have dared to explore thy Desolation may behold the glory of thy everlasting happiness, and, sharing it, "be comforted in Jerusalem!"

In conclusion, let me add these few final words. There is one thing no man can do unmoved—make a visit to that sacred spot, his mother's grave. His very attitude shows what power is retained even by a mother who has long been dead. The memories of

boyhood are awakening, its pictures rise before his The swimming eyes, and the sins, the worldliness, the Desolation impurity of a reckless manhood shrink back from the of Mary sight of the dead, dread the silent approach of her who inspired his innocence and protected his youth. Ah, the look of the boy is coming back to the face of the man, as he stands there in the presence of her who loved him, to whom he promised and vowed that, come what might in his life, he would do nothing to disgrace her teaching, to bring discredit to her memory. And now, with honest confusion and self-reproach, with words of appeal as though she really heard, with the loud beatings of an agitated heart, with an agony of love and tenderness he never thought to feel again, he renounces life's dreams and snares, life's vain joys and deceitful pleasures, life's lawlessness, and with a mother's pardon he recovers and receives back the innocence which, when he drove it from him, took refuge in the grave of her who gave it. Thus should it be with sinners, who are ever strangely dear to a mother's heart—thus should it be with all who visit Mary in her Desolation.











CONGREGATE VOS IN DOMUM DISCIPLINÆ

THE DEDICATION OF

THE CHURCH OF THE LONDON ORATORY

THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

In Fest. Apr. 16.

And going into one of the ships that was Simon's, He desired him to draw back a little from the land, and sitting He taught the multitude out of the ship.—St. Luke v.

of Salvation, she goes through the world as a vessel across the waters, and sails for the shores of eternity. And every ecclesiastical fabric is also like a ship: to this day, the main body

fabric is also like a ship: to this day, the main body of the building is called the "nave." St. Bonaventure tell us that there are four kinds of ships used by men—fishing vessels, vessels of war, merchant vessels, and passenger ships. A church is like the fishing boat, and a preacher is the fisherman. A church is a war vessel, in our seasons of temptation and strife. A church is a merchant vessel, from the treasures and sacraments she carries. A church is a passenger or emigrant ship, helping man's voyage from earth to heaven.

Let us see to what extent these distinctions apply to the Church whose beauty we so greatly love, to the Church of the Most Pure Heart of Mary.

The Church is a fishing vessel. Christ went up into one of the ships, a fishing-boat—and mark that

it was Simon Peter's—and sitting He taught. Then He said to Peter: Duc in altum—Draw out into the deep. Our Lord was teaching them how to be "Fishers of men." Draw out into the deep; search out the depths of sin and misery; there cast your nets; the greatest sinners will make the greatest saints. Fortunate fishermen! they "caught a great multitude of fish." Ah! Saint Philip, thou hast said thy sons were to be fishers of men, not hunters; we were to sit in "this little ship of thine," and fish for souls. "Vorei saper da voi come é fatto, Questo rete d'amore che tanto ha preso." Behold, here night after night a great multitude is to be found. Would that every single one were caught.

This little barque of St. Philip is not a war-ship. Churches served by members of the Religious Orders, by Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits—these are the war-vessels of the Church, and are in open, constant conflict with the devil, world, and flesh. We Oratorians stick to our humble fishing, and are content to cast St. Philip's net.

But our Church is "like the merchant's ship that bringeth her bread from afar." She brings the "Bread from Heaven," she is laden with sacramental graces and treasures. Dear Church! Thou hast a happier, holier destiny than that of Tyre: "thy neighbours who built thee have perfected thy beauty, with things brought from the islands of Italy"—with a Roman Saint for Pilot, thou bringest within reach of all the merchandise of the Kingdom of Heaven!

Lastly, the faithful who frequent our Church are passengers who trust to be landed on the eternal shore. "Men trust their lives to a little wood, and passing over the sea by ship are saved. Blessed is the Wood

by which Justice comes" (Wis. xiv.) The Cross is this The Church Wood-by the Cross we are saved. And again it is of the written: Entering into a boat, He passed over the Immaculate water and came into His Own city (Matthew ix. 1). Heart "We have not here an abiding city;" then let us cast in our lot with Jesus. What has the world to offer as good or as fair? Where shall we be as safe as with Him? Though storms rage around us, He is with us, teaching confidence by His tranquil sleep. When the ship is Simon's we know that our Lord is in it with us; the helm is Faith, held by an infallible Pilot— St. Peter's Successor; the anchor is Hope, the sails are Charity: Fine broidered linen from Egypt was woven for thy sail to be spread on thy mast (Ezech. xxvii.) Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ? The more the wind raves, the more the billowy waters grow dark and wild, and fling their foaming crests into the heart of the tempest, the stouter and stronger seems the outstretched sail—like a white wing it flashes against the dark sky: buoyant and beautiful, the birdlike hull holds her unerring course, and will land her happy passengers upon the Heavenly Coast.

Now, there is scarcely a vessel afloat but has its own name, by which it is known and called. Often, the name is of the sailor's native place, oftener, the name is of the one he most loves, in Catholic countries of the Saint he most reveres. It is a sort of dedication and consecration, which we can all understand, with which we can all sympathize. And here, again, we find an analogy between ships and churches. Churches are dedicated to some favourite Saint, or to some Mystery, as this our church is dedicated to the Most Pure Heart of Mary. It is the first in

England to be so dedicated: and the title was chosen in fulfilment of a vow by the first Fathers of the London Oratory. Now, when we know a Saint well, we know his tastes, his devotions, his likings, all that may give him pleasure. What he was on earth he continues to be in heaven; and, till the Day of Judgment, we on earth can add to his heavenly joys. So I venture to think that one of St. Philip's joys is the fact that the church of his London sons is dedicated to the Most Pure Heart. In his own earthly life, he was all for such devotion to Mary: amongst the churches offered to him in Rome he chose that of the Vallicella, because it was dedicated to Mary; he insisted that the Madonna should be painted in every altar-piece of Chiesa Nuova. That in our Dedication we have pleased our Saint becomes to us a consoling certainty: and to make St. Philip care for the London Oratory is to do no little thing for London.

Sailors love the beauty, the strength, the swiftness, the snow-white sails, the tapering spars, everything from keel to truck in their barque. And, like them, we love our church: Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house, and the place of the habitation of Thy glory (Ps. xxv. 8). In this city of churches, of venerable houses of God, which our forefathers in race and faith built for us as well as for themselves, and of which the sacrilegious despoiler has robbed us, it is consoling to have so fair a church as this for the service of God. Nor can we help rejoicing in its beauty. In this great world of work and care, of hurry and bustle, deprived of the neighbourhood of our silent dead, where shall we find peace, where

shall we go aside to think of heaven, if not into our The Church own dear church, where we have ever shared so many of the graces with our brethren, where we have ever found Immaculate "help in Mary, joy in Jesus?"

Heart

On others as well as on ourselves the beauty of the church has its effect, it brings strangers here, and at times in such crowds that it is difficult to pray. If only they would keep to what they come for, look at the church and not at people praying and confessing, I do not think anyone would grudge them a sight of our beautiful church. Inspect the ship, by all means; but do not disturb either passengers or crew. And the analogy here again holds good. For after our Sunday night service the church looks very like one of those huge ocean-steamers about to start to the ends of the earth, and thronged by visitors led by affection or curiosity to see the last of her before the anchor is weighed. Many "remain to pray:" they join us in our prayers, they sing our hymns, bless themselves, use rosaries, seem unable to keep away. And yet they are not of us, they are not going with us when we set sail for eternity. How can they prefer to trust to those wretched, crank craft, in which deserters from the Barque of Peter cruise, like pirates in the waters of a treacherous sea—the coffin-ships of souls! They stay where Orders are now not even doubtful, where even Baptism itself is too often doubtfully administered. If only they would be brave, honest, and true! No one can tell beforehand what happiness it is to be a Catholic. They may safely set sail with us for heaven. We steer by the Star of the Sea; they may well trust their lives to this little Wood, for it is a true part of the blessed Wood of the Cross of Jesus,

Rosa the Cross that the Apostles preached, and the Ark of Mystica Salvation by which we reach the eternal shore!

O sinless Heart, all hail! God's dear delight, all hail! Our home is deep in thee, Eternally, eternally.



QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

OUR BLESSED LADY, MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL

In Fest. Apr. 26.

HILST fathers in dealing with their children generally have recourse to the authority with which they are invested by nature and the direct Divine Commandment, mothers refrain from the exercise of theirs, preferring to employ the persuasive and gentle influence of loving advice or An early instance is given us in the Bible. The mother of Jacob uses the very word: Now, therefore, my son, follow my counsel (Gen. xxvii. 8). There was probably a danger of violence and fratricide, had Jacob attempted to obtain by other means the blessing to which he was entitled, and Rebecca hints as much when she says: Why shall I be deprived of both my sons in one day? The sacred writer neither praises nor blames the advice of the mother, and merely records its complete success. And we may feel sure that we shall obtain for ourselves yet greater blessings than Jacob's, if we follow the advice—the sweet, wise, holy Counsel of our Mother: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye (John ii. 5).

"Establish within thyself a heart of good counsel," says Ecclesiasticus (xxxvii. 17). We are fortunate in seeing and hearing things unseen and unheard in the days of Ecclesiasticus, in belonging to generations that call Mary Blessed, in having the blessed advantage of

profiting by her example and counsel. We are able to trace in Mary all those glorious gifts and virtues ascribed to Wisdom in the Sapiential Books, which we are exhorted to study and acquire in response to her invitation. "For in her is the spirit of understanding: holy, one, manifold, subtile, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving that which is good, quick, which nothing hindereth, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast (Wisdom vii). And again: I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue (Eccli, xxiv). I Wisdom dwell in Counsel (Prov. viii). Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom (Eccli. xiv). And blessed are they who seek the Seat of Wisdom, who listen to Our Lady of Good Counsel, and take her as the Pattern of Perfection placed before them by God. Our lesson is set us in what follows:

Between those who love there must be resemblance. "Love either finds or forms a likeness." Divine Love made the likeness: Let us make man to our own image and likeness. And when man lost original justice and became all-unlike his Divine Lover, that Lover, faithful and constant, had recourse to the expedient of infinite wisdom and goodness, and made the likeness again. This time, by making Himself flesh: God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 3). Since Adam's day till now, all the thoughts, affections, desires of human love consecrated to God have been turned to Him at whose Name every knee shall bow. The Seed of the Woman was looked for with longing eyes, was promised with renewed signs such as the Cloud, the Rock, was

foretold by prophecies, was foreshown by Sacrifices. Our Lady Still more, perhaps, is the "Hope of Israel" foreshown of Good by those who are recognized and acknowledged to be Counsel His Types, such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sara that bore you," exclaims Isaias, when predicting that "The Just One is near at hand." He bids the children of Abraham to study the virtues in Abraham which will produce in them the required likeness of love. And so is Christ now made known to us by the Word of God, by the Sacrifice of the Mass, by the voice of the Church, by the lives of the Saints. A Saint is the more loved by us the more we can trace in him his resemblance to Jesus: and we are the more disposed to imitate him the more we see his virtues and conduct to be Christlike. Even while many were to be found who had seen the Lord, while recollections of Jesus were keen and vivid, St. Paul, the most enthusiastic, unselfish lover of our Lord, writes thus: Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ (I. Cor. iv. 16). Be followers of me, brethren, and observe those who walk as you have our model (Phil. iii).

"Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." This is the exhortation of our Lord, and He would have us live in the hope at least of eventually accomplishing it. "Learn of Me," He also exclaims: and this we will attempt, though our sense of sin, our sense of infirmity make us glad of the company and assistance of a fellow creature. Well knowing our weakness and compassionating it, our Lord has given us—to each individually—a beautiful and an attractive Pattern, according to whom we may practise virtue, and grow into His own image and likeness. This is

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His Mother, and our Mother Mary. He said to St. Catherine of Siena: She is chosen and used by Me as an alluring bait with which I capture souls.

What are His reasons? Chiefly these, we may reverently suppose. Virtues are various in kind and in degree, and we learn them with difficulty; for there is in us much that refuses to submit to the necessary discipline. Some virtues are divine: they are God's: He it is who adorns them, not they who make Him perfect. In truth, they are Himself, the Divine Being in the absolute simplicity of spiritual substance. Such as imply no imperfection, not even the imperfection of an origin from nothing—such as Wisdom, Justice, Love—are the more admirable and adorable to us in proportion as they the more fully represent Him and make manifest to our feeble apprehension the glory and beauty of the Divine Nature. Other virtues are human or appropriate to creatures; because they declare the infirmity of a created nature which they are given to assist and adorn. Such are Faith, Obedience, Chastity, which presuppose a certain infirmity of mind, or will, or body. Lastly, there are virtues which would not exist had not sin entered the world, such as the virtue of Penance.

Now it is this virtue of Penance that we ought properly most to cultivate. For reasons well known to each conscience, we should never desist from its practice. Here we are in company with Saints, and glorious Saints: but we are called on to add to penance the practice of higher virtues. "Learn of Me," our Saviour says. But some virtues of created natures He Himself could not possess: they are incompatible with the Divine character of His Holiness. He, "The Author

and finisher of Faith," could not have Faith: He is Our Lady Faith's adorable Object, not its subject. And there- of Good fore we find that practically we require a pattern more Counsel in accordance with our inferiority. Blessed be Mary! She is His creature like ourselves; and she enhances those virtues of the creature which should be ours, and which dispose and prepare us for the virtues of Jesus, those beautiful, attractive, but perhaps almost too majestic virtues which shine in Him so conspicuously. They are theandric, they borrow splendour from the Divine Person Whom they clothe as with the richest robe. It amazes us to be told that we too are to possess them and so "put on Christ," that we shall be like Him, and most of all in heaven itself where we shall see Him as He is.

With His Blessed Mother, our most holy fellowmortal, we are more at ease when we think of imitation: we perhaps even feel as though a certain amount of humble emulation is permitted and encouraged—an emulation which rises in us when we witness the sweet complacency with which Jesus regards her: we dare to wish to be like her to win one of His smiles. His looks of love, approval and gracious favour. When the sun shines, the moon and stars are hidden by his brightness, when his light departs and night comes then the moon reigns, then the Star of the Sea guides us "till the day dawns and the shadows flee away." Thus it is with the Sun of Justice and the Mirror of Justice: Mary's virtues are from Jesus, the moon's light is from the sun: and "the Splendour of the Father" is shown to us in a way that does not utterly blind and discourage us. "O Mary," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "with magnificent examples of virtue wherewith thou

art enriched, thou dost excite us to imitate thee, and thou dost enlighten our night: for he who walketh in thy ways walketh not in darkness but hath the light of life." The Church also proclaims that Mary's "glorious life illuminates all the Churches."

Another most powerful motive which makes us receive Mary as our Pattern is this undoubted truth. that God gave her to us as our Mother and us to her as her Children. Our instinct of children is then enlisted in her behalf. To fulfil the Commandment, we must imitate and so honour our Mother. St. Bernard says: Strive in all possible ways to imitate the Mother of God, for then without doubt wilt thou show thyself to be truly her son, and she will aid thee as her son. . . To obtain the help of her intercession, neglect not the imitation of her life. St. Ambrose declares: Jesus chose the Virgin Mother, in whom shineth as in a mirror the form of virtue, that she might be to all the Example of chastity. I wonder not that it has been ever found sweeter and easier to imitate Mary—supreme as she is—than any Saint whom we know and love.

But we still have other considerations. As by sin we descend -(Oh, so disgracefully!—to the slime of earth, so by sin's opposite do we mount and become heavenly. May we find this participation of heaven granted to us at least during our Months of Mary! So long as we in our meditations gaze on her whom God calls all fair and beautiful, may the imaginations and suggestions of foul sin and corruption be forbidden our spirit! May the sight of Mary make us pure and holy, even as in heaven the Blest are impeccable through their beatific Vision of Uncreated Beauty! For think what the

sight of Jesus was to Mary Magdalen, to Peter. Now Our Lady Mary is the Mirror of Uncreated Beauty. She is that of Good still Fountain of crystal purity whereon the Eternal Counsel God gazes down, and we who come hither stand and marvel at the mysterious likeness to the Most High. That which Lucifer in pride desired, Mary in her humility has received, to a degree of resemblance beyond the aspiration of the ambitious Archangel. "Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also:" and I dare to say he that seeth Mary seeth Jesus in His Mother. Not only did the Holy Ghost descend upon her, the power of the Most High overshadow her, the Word, so often echoed to her hearing, become really present in her womb. The Splendour of the Father, coming to us through Mary's Most Pure Heart, clothed Himself in fair virginal flesh which bore unmistakably the lineaments of her earthly beauty, and not content with this resemblance—far as it went—deepened it by ineffable sanctifications, and made that sinless Mother "the Very Seal of resemblance" (Ezech. 28), so that the Saints cry out: What is Mary but an exact copy of Christ?

She is, then, the fair and spotless copy of those virtues found in Him. She is the Sacred Scripture in which we study Christ. What He was that she imitated, and engraved all His virtues in her Heart. "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." How beautiful is the life of Jesus when seen through the translucent, Most Pure Heart of Mary! To that Heart we her fellow creatures, her own Children, are irresistibly drawn, and, behold, even as the rays of the sun are collected by the crystal lense so are the virtues of Christ centred in that Pure Heart,

and burn and mark with inflaming love their image upon ours, and produce there a resemblance to Jesus, Who is her Divine Love and ours also.

Let us then take courage: Mary is our Mother of Good Counsel, and though her virtues are far above us, still we will hope to receive of her fulness. We learn the virtues of her life, as we learn the music of her Magnificat, in the hope that our beginnings will be perfected hereafter. And so love, if it has found no likeness, will make one.





AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM, ORA PRO NOBIS

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

In Fest. Maii. 24.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all the heresies of the entire world.—Ex Offic. Brev. Rom.

HERE is a sound of war, of victory and triumph in these words which may be somewhat startling, and unexpected by those who habitually regard Mary as the Mother of Mercy, Consoler of the Afflicted, "Gentlest of the gentle." Within her home the Church, and towards her children she is indeed the most tender and compassionate Mother; but to her Cant. 6.8. enemy she is "terrible as an army set in array," "as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks, a Cant. 6.4. thousand bucklers hanging thereon." The enemy of Mary is the Devil, the Serpent to whom God said, "I will put enmities between thee and the Woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." The Woman has conquered, and has sung her Magnificat. Her "spirit exulted in God her Saviour," Who "gave her the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In that song Mary says: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath cast down the mighty from their throne, and hath exalted the humble. The humility of our Lady moderates her own modest rejoicing; so we must turn to the Prophets to learn more of the discomfiture of Satan. This mighty one was cast down and "fell like lightning from heaven."

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer! who didst rise in the morning (Isai. xiv. 12). Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God, perfect in thy ways from the days of thy creation until iniquity was found in thee (Ezec. xxviii. 12). And this iniquity was: Thou saidest in thy heart I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend on high above the clouds, I will be like the Most High (Isai. xiv. 14). Such was the first iniquity, pride and rebellion, ambition to be like the Most High, the light-bearer aspiring to be the very Light - the morning star striving to mount up into the higher heaven of the Blessed Trinity, and to claim the throne of God. Such was the discord that interrupted the harmony of heaven, the Serpent's hiss of envy when the stars were shouting for joy, the dreadful war-cry of discontent raised while the sons of God made a joyful melody. There was a pause—a hush—and then with faithful followers Michael the Archangel, shouting in angelic anger, "Who is like to God?" smote and cast down the Devil and his angels.

We next hear of Satan when he issues forth from the everlasting fires prepared for his punishment, and persisting in rebellion renews the hopeless war. He beholds man in Paradise, made to God's image and likeness, he sees that which he had coveted for himself bestowed on one of an inferior nature. In Adam and Eve he beholds the prototypes of the Word made Flesh and the Virgin Mother; and endeavours to retrieve in Paradise the losses he sustained in Heaven. He prevails. He plies them with the same temptation to which he yielded—"Ye shall be as gods"—he

infects them with the same treasonable ambition, and Our Lady deceives our first mother and persuades her to commit Help of an act of disobedience. But his success is dearly Christians purchased, and retribution falls swiftly on him in the shape of additional punishment. Scorn and contempt shall be the degrading portion of the once bright angel; he who would ascend into the heavens shall crawl upon his belly, and the weak, frail nature shall triumph in turn and crush his venomous head.

But the great Dragon, who drew a third part of the starry spirits from heaven in his first fall, exercises in consequence of his second enterprise a baneful influence on mankind. His seed continues the strife of evil against good. He imparts to men his own proud spirit of rebellion and opposition. Any god rather than the living and true God shall be worshipped and adored! The true religion, the worship of Enos and the sons of God shall be mimicked, copied by a false religion, by devil worship and idol worship. "I will be like to God," repeats the fallen Lucifer: and the enmity endures.

The Saviour Himself announced that the final overthrow of Satan was at hand. That Divine Seed of the Woman and the Woman herself by the Cross delivered us from the tyranny of Satan. The prince of this world was cast out, and so room was made for the Church of Jesus Christ. From the side of the Heavenly Adam in the sleep of death came forth His beautiful Bride on the tide of Blood and Water. But the Church herself was in turn assailed by the relentless enemy. He soon gained influence enough over the corrupt heart of man to give battle anew; heresies surrounded the Church of Christ, as idolatries had

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surrounded Jerusalem, and heresies were the new weapons of Satan and the gates of hell.

Let us understand what heresy precisely is. I would say shortly that it is a baptised person's voluntary and pertinacious error contrary to the Catholic Faith, an error of the mind, thinking truth to be falsehood or falsehood to be truth—an act of the will, a choice—the Greek word for heresy is choice—heretics are those who choose for themselves pertinacious, because the error is persisted in after the person embracing it knows and understands that the Catholic Church teaches the opposite of that which the individual chooses to maintain. Now Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the True Living God: and He is the Head of His Church, and is with her. To listen to the Church is to listen to Him, to despise the Church is to despise Him, to contradict the Church is to contradict Him. It is to put our lie in the place of His truth. As God and Man He is dishonoured by such conduct, and "the father of lies" is the author of the wickedness. To oppose a doctrine of the Religion of Christ is to start a false religion: and therefore wilful heresy would seem to be fearfully sinful, since it is a sin of which men make a religion.

This explains the vehemence of the language of the Apostles about heresy and heretics. "Their doctrine spreads like a cancer" (Tim. ii). "I beseech you, brethren, to mark those who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrines which you have learnt, and avoid them; for they that use such serve not Christ our Lord but their own belly, and by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent." "The God of peace crush Satan under your

feet speedily" (Rom. xv). "I would they were cut off Our Lady who trouble you with dissensions, sects" (Gal. v. 12 and Help of 20). "What part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? Christians Wherefore go out from them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II. Cor. vi). "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that he that is such an one is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment" (Titus iii). St. Paul describes to St. Timothy the proud, stubborn traitors, who in the last times will be heresy's latest promoters. "Having an appearance of godliness indeed, but denying the power thereof, ever learning and never attaining to a knowledge of the truth. These also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith" (Tim. iii). "Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of God hath not God. . . If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him God speed thee" (II. John Ep.). The Angel of the Church of Pergamus was warned and rebuked by our Lord, because he tolerated "them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites" (Apoc. ii. 15). Let this suffice to show how heresy was hated by the Apostles, and let it help to explain why the Apostolic Church is to this day ever careful to prevent heresies and to recall heretics to the Fold.

The earliest heresies were brought to nought by Mary. All false doctrines against the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation were practically refuted by the truth and reality of the Maternity of our Blessed Lady. Later, we have her Preacher, St. Dominic, winning with the Rosary weapon battles against heresy and

ignorance. Then, when the Council of Trent was held, its decrees and definitions concerning original sin were illustrated by doctrines and statements regarding Mary. From that time, Protestant heresy, although already split into many fragmentary falsehoods, gathered itself together in fierce war against our Lady, because the Virginity of Mary and the holy Vows which it prompts were a crushing condemnation of the impure licence permitted by Lutheran Protestantism. In protesting against Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin all the rival and dissilient sects found themselves willing to agree and combine. Thereby they proved themselves to be the predicted seed of the Serpent; but, in spite of calumnies and blasphemies, they do not prevent all generations from calling Mary Blessed. In devotionless disrespect, they refuse to our Blessed Lady titles of respect and love in use for centuries; but now they are fast finding out that their grotesque isolation is becoming more and more untenable, ludicrous, and insolent in the eyes of Christendom.

In our own day, even in the presence of many among us, a conflict between the Woman and the Serpent took place; and Mary Immaculate crushed the head of the infernal foe. The nineteenth century had views of its own, which were not those of the Church of Christ. The spirit of infidelity spread fast and far; misbelief was succeeded by disbelief; reason was exalted, faith was scornfully called superstition; secular instruction was to displace Christianity's religious education in its schools, according to its professors, matter was the only thing that really existed, spirit was relegated to the imaginary spaces;

as for the corruption and sinfulness of human nature, Our Lady the age laughed the idea to scorn, proclaimed that Help of no Fall had taken place, that there had been a Christians steady improvement in human beings from the very first, and one that would have been quicker but for the meddling of the Church, and maintained with vehemence the failure of the past, and that the hope of the future was in—Progress and Police! Whereas, one short sentence in the Scriptures gives a complete answer to it all: The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad.

Our Blessed Lord foretold that the Holy Ghost would "convince the world of sin." This impenitent age of ours acknowledged no sinfulness in man, but the Holy Ghost has condemned the heresy in our own day. The Church, whom the Apostles taught to believe "in the remission of sin," pronounced an infallible judgment against the contention of the world. This was done when Pius IX, defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady, proclaiming that she is the only member of the human family exempted by a singular and glorious privilege from the stain of Original Sin. All others fell in Adam; "all have sinned and do need the glory of God;" "if any man say he hath not sinned, he lieth and the truth is not in him." Mary alone is sinless. She is "Our tainted nature's solitary boast." Thus there appeared in the heaven the prophesied Sign, the Woman clothed with the Sun, the Immaculate Queen. In this Sign the old Serpent was once more crushed and conquered, and, like all its predecessors, our modern heresy was destroyed by Mary.

Words worth

I can well believe that if those who do not invoke our Lady, because they are members of a church which does not permit it, could only realize that in this the father of lies is their leader—they would be ashamed to share his sentiments, would renounce Satan, and heed at last the kind words formerly addressed to them by Pio Nono: The world will never know true peace, till there shall be One Fold and One Shepherd.



PONE ME UT SIGNACULUM SUPER COR TUUM

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

In Fest. Jul. 16.

T is not strange that those who would be perfect, religious orders especially, should receive encouragement and signal favours from Our Lord and His Mother. Of these graces some are comparatively secret and unnoticed, while some are given as testimonials, and are therefore public and conspicuous. Thus St. Philip's sons have from their Saint, but almost as a matter of private family history, that the Madonna herself was the Foundress of the Oratory, though they do not consider that the revelation was intended for more than their private, domestic consolation and encouragement. Whereas the Carmelites with safety can claim to have an acknowledged privilege and especial recognition of their dearness to Mary in the permission granted to them of keeping with the whole Church the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

It is no longer to the Mountain of Carmel that our thoughts hasten upon this Feast of Our Lady. As of old, Carmel rises in wooded heights above the plains of Phenicia, and its cliffs look down on the blue waters of the Levant. Tradition and legend still lend to Mount Carmel glory and renown. Even Mount Sinai, stern in beauty, and sanctified of old in the awful splendours of the Lord God Who there spoke with His servant—even Sinai itself is outrivalled

by the Mountain dedicated to Our Blessed Lady. But, it would seem that, for mysterious reasons not revealed, the Holy Land has forfeited the favour and lost the confidence of Mary. Her Nazareth Home was carried away to Loreto: and the Feast of to-day suggests not the forest-clad Mountain, the Prophet, and the Convent of Our Lady, but rather that little brown Badge which Our Lady gave to her Carmelite client, St. Simon Stock, not on the heights of Carmel but in the green lowlands of the Cambridge portion of her English Dowry. It is enough for our devotion if we handle and kiss with reverence the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel to-day, while blessing Mary for the many graces she obtains and confers on those who wear it for her dear sake.

Some words of grateful praise are surely due to the Saint who procured this special privilege from Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Saint whose personal individuality seems to be almost effaced by the splendour of the Scapular entrusted to him as a universal gift to his Order and its friends. eremitical spirit took possession of him in the days of his innocent boyhood. Had he been an Italian, it might have led him to hide like another Benedict in a cave such as that which sheltered the early life of the Patriarch of the West. Had he been a Spaniard, he might have anticipated the conduct of St. Teresa, that Glory of his Order, and started to find some desert solitude in which he might be lost to the world. But, being a sturdy English lad, he chose for his cell the hollow trunk or stock of one of those grand oaks which we English so greatly love and still boast of not a little. In this strange abode, he

passed many years of penance and austerity; and, like Our Lady his Lord and Saviour Who "was in the desert with of Mount the beasts," he saw more of wild animals than of Carmel men. He subsisted on roots and berries, though at times he had better fare, for bread was brought to him by dogs even as ravens brought bread to St. Paul, the first hermit. It sounds like the beginning of some fairy tale; but I doubt not that some of my readers may have records quite as authentic and minute of ancestors living in St. Simon's days, who slew their Saracens in the Crusades, and helped to force King John to sign the Magna Charta! The Blessed Virgin herself was St. Simon's teacher and protectress. She it was who in due time warned him that her sons would come hither from Mount Carmel, and that he was to join their Order. Two English Crusaders, Lord de Vesey and Lord De Gray, had made their pilgrimage to Mount Carmel, and had induced the brethren to seek refuge in their distant country from the approaching forces of the Saracens. The pressure of persecution drove them from their home on Carmel, and providentially brought them from the East to the West. Just as in our own days the Irish exiles, leaving their own land, have in their faith and love spread the true Faith in this country and America.

In the year 1212, the Carmelites arrived, and found St. Simon ready to join them. The first monastery of the Order in Europe was founded at Aylesford on the Medway in Kent. St. Simon quitted his hollow tree, and became a member of this community. It speaks volumes for his sanctity that, three years later, he should have been elected Vicar General of the whole Order in the West.

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It was on account of the strong opposition to the establishment of the Order of Mount Carmel in the West that St. Simon repeatedly implored and at last obtained from Our Lady a sign of her protection. He composed a little hymn to express his hopes and prayer. His Flos Carmeli may be paraphrased thus: Carmel's fair Flower! Rod blossom-laden! Smile on thy Dower, Meek Mother-Maiden! None equals thee. Grant us a Sign Thou dost protect us; Mark us for thine; Shine and direct us, Star of the Sea! It was at Cambridge that Our Lady appeared to him in answer to his cry for help. "She gave him a scapular which she bore in her hand, in order that 'by it the holy (Carmelite) order might be known and protected from the evils which assailed it,' and added, 'this will be the privilege for you and for all Carmelites; no one dying in this scapular will suffer eternal burning'" (Cath. Dict. p. 744).

Perchance St. Simon had felt that Dominicans had the Rosary, Franciscans the Portiuncula devotion, and that it was not too much to expect some signal favour of this kind from Our Lady in behalf of her own Carmelite order. Great as is the privilege which he obtained, we can scarcely wonder at his success: for was he not named Dilectus Mariae? And do we not ourselves well know how merciful she is whose name is Mother of Mercy? Do we not know that the very wearing of the Scapular is an incentive to devotion, an inducement never to consent to what would disgrace it—that it is a security and a sign that we may humbly hope for the unmerited grace of final perseverance and speedy release from the sufferings of Purgatory? Oueen of Purgatory is no empty title given to the Mother of Mercy. She does not plead in vain, when,

like Esther, she bespeaks the favour and grace of the Our Lady King in behalf of her suffering people. Through Mary, of Mount mercy is exalted over justice, even amid the penal Carmel flames of justice, and her suffrage in behalf of her Carmelite clients delivers them in accordance with her promise. So that the little Brown Scapular which nearly all of us are proud to wear in life, and which we mean to have as our vesture in death—this, like a Sacramental of the Church, disposes us to worthiness of conduct whilst we are on earth, and is a pledge that Our Lady of Mount Carmel will rescue us from loss, and pain, and prolonged expiation in the other world.

It is commonly held in this country that such things as scapulars and other insignia of Catholic devotion are brought hither from the lands of excitable people whose fervour is to be accounted for by the hotness of the climate. They should be told that the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel comes to us from Cambridge, not from Rome, and is as English as was the Kentish oak in which the Dilectus Mariae dwelt. On the Feast of to-day, we surely ought to pray most earnestly that England may speedily be brought back to the practices and pious devotions of the days when it was England's glory to be the Dowry of Our Blessed Lady.

OUR LADY OF THE SNOW

HE great and beautiful Roman Basilica known

In Fest. Aug. 5.

as St. Mary Major celebrates on August 5 the annual Feast of its Dedication, under the glorious title of Our Lady of the Snow. The recorded miracle which is commemorated in the name of the Feast has a singular attractiveness all its own, while ushering in the still greater splendours of the next day's Feast of the Transfiguration. It is another picture of the Morning Star announcing with its pure ray the coming of the Sun of Justice. It is Mary showing to us our Jesus before the end of exile. For what better preparation can be made to be in spirit with Jesus on Mount Tabor and see His garments become "shining and exceeding white as snow" (St. Mark ix. 2), than to visit the Esquiline mountain to-day, and there study the lessons of innocence and purity so significantly taught by Our Lady of the Snow. We may consider the map or plan of God's temple laid in snowy whiteness on the surface of the ground; and we may learn the meaning of the miracle that preserves in spite of the heat of an August sun the intact form of the

The soul of Our Lady would be as eager in heaven to magnify the Lord as it was while still on earth; and it is no wonder that Our Lady, in accepting the gift of John the Roman patrician and his childless wife,

beautiful, cold, chaste snow.



DUM DISCERNII CCELESTIS REGES SUPER EAM, NIVE DEALBABUNTUR IN SELMON



bade them build a church with the fortune they offered. Our Lady of For by this means Mary gave to her Divine Son fresh the Snow altars where with earthly ministers He might exercise His royal priesthood.

The Queen of Heaven instructed her Angels to scatter snow on the Esquiline hill, and thus was sketched out the design of a stately basilica to be discovered shining white and unmelted beneath the hot August sun. Built by the Roman noble under the eye of Pope Liberius, it still remains a monument of magnificent piety, a memorial of the maternal loving-kindness of Mary.

Our Lady of the Snow also makes use of her church to admonish and teach us. According to St. Paul, the very body of a Christian is itself a temple of the Holy Ghost, dedicated and consecrated by Baptism to the worship and service of God. The existence of material buildings in which He deigns to dwell Sacramentally neither conceals nor contradicts the truth that "the kingdom of God is within us," that our bodies are His temples, that He seeks for these, asks for them, prefers them to the stateliest edifice, declares that in them is His "rest for ever." Our Divine Saviour taught the same doctrine, when He said "Destroy this temple," meaning the temple of His Body, when He explained that angelic purity constitutes the decorous holiness of these "members of Christ." When the Virgin-Mother of Christ made the design of her Esquiline temple in pure virgin snow, she was giving a beautiful commentary on the Gospel.

When the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, He manifested His love of chaste virginity. His Mother was ever Virgin. His holy Foster-father had the same grace, and the confidence reposed by Jesus

in the Disciple whom He loved was won by St. John's possession of this virtue of virginity. The gentle caresses given by Jesus to innocent little children confirm His praises of Evangelical Chastity. He makes it evident that, though He has to water the garden with His own life-blood, He looks to gather many a lily of purity from a redeemed world. All flesh shall see the salvation of God—that even which has been most cruelly and shamefully defiled. His love is still the sinner's: only, pity and mercy are added: and with His own most Precious Blood, for kindliness as well as costliness, He washes the guilty, and thus gives a new purity to soul and body. "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." Then is the Magdalen confided to the Mary "full of grace." Forgiven and Unfallen are then alike welcome at the altar of the Lord, where communicants are united in mystical marriage to the Lamb of God, the Word made Flesh. Ah! if God found the heavens and earth in the beginning good and blessed them, still more does He think good, and bless, and take delight in, the holiness of the temples of the Holy Ghost, the purity of Christians, the sanctity of "the members of Christ."

We may recall the words of Wisdom: O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself: and it triumpheth, crowned for ever winning the reward of undefiled conflicts (iv). It is known not only to God but to men, known and revered by them, prized above all wealth, honour, rank, health and

life itself. The lilies of the Virgin Martyrs are as Our Lady of dear to them as are the roses in their crowns. It is the Snow worse than death to any true man or woman to sustain defeat in the conflicts for this virtue—conflicts which ought to be utterly undefiled. Our Lord has taught that we must watch over every sense, guard our eyes, and keep our minds ready to reject suggestions. and flee from danger. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God! If true to Jesus, we Catholics are in this matter strict and unvielding. Others declare that such practice of this virtue as is enjoined on us is impossible; and they in excuse of their weakness dare to attribute to nature what is the consequence of man's self-inflicted injuries, the corruption of a festering wound, the warp and wrench of a will that has surrendered to perverted tendencies and proneness to evil. But we have an assistance all our own. God gives us MARY. We are surrounded by perils, as are others; we claim not to be stronger than they; we too are prone to evil from childhood; all the snares and fascinations of the world, the flesh, and the devil are around us, while within us is the traitor, Concupiscence. But as in the days of old, when all flesh had corrupted its way, God gave to the Patriarch an Ark of safety, so now God gives to men the Purity of Mary, and Our Lady of the Snow is antidote and remedy in our necessity. Devotion to Our Lady helps the children of the Church in their undefiled conflicts to win the reward of Chastity.

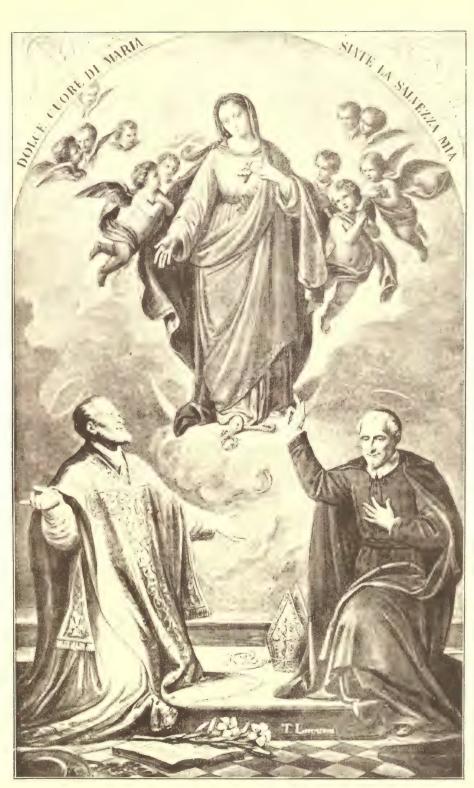
THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY IN GLORY

For the Feast kept on Sunday after the Octave of the Assumption.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!-Ps. lxxxiii.

HE refusal of the Protestants to be shepherded by the Vicar of Christ causes them to forfeit their place in the Church of Christ. Their denial of certain doctrines, notably that of the Real Presence, and that of the veneration due to the Mother of God, deprives their form of religious worship of all vitality. Many of them have felt this keenly, and have attempted to bring back Christ to their churches. They cry out: Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place, Thou and the Ark of Thy sanctification. They place an image of Our Lady in the reredos of St. Paul's. But murmurs, remonstrances, and law-suits assail them; and they are told—with perfect accuracy—This is not the Protestant religion. Most true! The Protestant religion closes the life of Our Lord with His Ascension, and will have only memories of Him and His Mother—not even memorials.

If only in reparation for this cold neglect, this disrespectful attitude, the children of the Church in this country should the more loudly call Mary Blessed, declare her prerogatives, and sing of the loveliness of this Tabernacle of God with men. Moreover, we may hope that by thus dispelling errors, which often are



LÆTARE, ET EXULTA IN OMNI CORDE, FILIA JERUSALEM



quite involuntary, we may bring to God those who The Most are kept from Him by their estrangement from His Pure Heart Mother.

There! in that title all is said—Mary is the Mother of God. Every Woman calls her own child one whom she conceives and brings forth: and exactly and precisely thus does Mary claim as her very Son Him Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of her at Bethlehem. Though grand graces prepare her for it, though her correspondence with those graces merits it, though miracles accomplish it, nothing divests this relationship of its matter-of-fact simplicity. Her perpetual virginity does not diminish, but intensifies, almost doubles its strength and completeness; and His divine and infinite Majesty does not deprive it of the least element of physical reality and truth.

Mary, then, was not merely holiest of creatures, Virgin of virgins, a nine months' Tabernacle for the Body of Jesus, as was the Tomb during the three days, not merely a gateway of priceless pearl, through which He passed in His descent from heaven for our salvation—not merely the momentary instrument of His miraculous entrance into the world—but Mary was a living being, a virgin of Nazareth, a maiden whose soul and natural powers of mind and heart, whose very senses were expressly designed for the functions of the Divine Maternity, were from all eternity predestined for that office, were in God's good time made and prepared for it, and on the Annunciation Day were actually one and all installed once and for ever in that office, every faculty, every sense that naturally could require it being supernaturally raised and lifted into constant and abiding

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relationship to her God. Even as the waters of Baptism confer on our soul the supernatural moral relationship of adopted child of God, and stamp and seal the soul with an indelible sacramental character, so did the royal grace of the Divine Maternity anoint Mary Queen and Mother, and confer on her the indestructible physical relationship of Mother to the Incarnate Word. And He, her Son, her Babe in her bosom, in her arms, in her home beside her, in her joys and her sorrows, in life and in death, and in everlasting glory, is Himself the Seal of this indelible "gift without repentance."

But can God want a mother? In Himself and for Himself God wants nothing. He is infinitely Self-sufficing. He has—nay, He is—infinite life, bliss, knowledge, love; and has no need of creatures. But when He resolves to raise a fallen race to a participation in that bliss, and life, and knowledge, and love, by His own self-abasement, then indeed He begins, as He Himself says, "to be poor and needy,"—when God becomes a babe, God does want a Mother. Like any other, the Son of Man wants a Mother to swathe and guard Him, to cherish and soothe Him. When the Voice of Eternal Joy is become the wailing of a poor Infant asking to be fed and fondled, then is a Mother wanted. When the "tiny hand" is stretched that it may be held, when the little feet falter and wait for support, then God wants a Mother. He wants her to receive His young Heart's love, and to give Him all her own to teach Him "by experience" obedience the obedience and subjection of choice, of filial piety, of tenderness.

God wants a Mother—in that, being true Man and dwelling amongst us, He wants one in whom He may

have the human right and the human happiness of The Most awakening all gracious natural feelings and emotions, Pure Heart and chiefly maternal joy and sorrow—and therefore He in Glory looks for them in His Mother's Most Pure Heart, and as He is Salvation to the saved so is He Joy to His Blessed Mother. From the greeting of the glad Angel, from the AVE of Gabriel, the Mother's love is glowing and thrilling with an ever-growing joy—joy because He is her own, and she is His--"I to my Beloved, and My Beloved to me"—joy in feeding Him, in washing Him, in seeing more and more the light of love and intelligence beaming in her Silent One's eyes—joy in bending over Him, and adoring the smile upon His sweet sleeping lips, and feeling the warmth of His gentle breathing—joy in handling Him and carrying Him joy in whispering His Name to Him, and all the ecstatic prayers of her love and praises—joy in His beauty, in His growth, in His gentleness, in His submission, in His winning ways—joy in the increase of the Child "in wisdom and age and grace with God and man."

Nor would the life of God made Man be utterly like ours, unless sorrow also found entrance into His Mother's Heart. Its love is boundless as an ocean, and as an ocean it has not only its flow of maternal joy, but also its ebb of maternal sorrow. Therefore God wanted a Mother to mourn for Him as mothers mourn their first-born, their only-born, to follow Him going to the death, to stand beneath the Cross, to receive Him back into her arms, to lay Him in the Garden-Tomb, where the head-cloth of the dead Son and the veil of the bereaved Mother meet and mingle, and hide the two white faces from our pitying view.

Does God still want her? Does God need a Mother, now that He is returned to the glory which He had with His Father before the world was made? Yes, indeed He wants her still, He wants her there. When He ascended on high, and entered the heavenly kingdom, when His Wounded, Beautiful Feet opened the way, and trod the streets of Sion, our Fore-runner would then have been glad had she who followed Him to Calvary been with Him in His triumph. But for our sakes He waited; and fifteen years of earthly time passed away before He, the Heavenly Solomon, welcomed the entrance of His Mother, rose to meet her and bow down to her, and "a throne was set for the King's Mother, and she sat on His right hand."

He wants her there in His joy, that she may share it—in His glory, that she may exult therein, that His everlasting Dwelling and Tabernacle with man may, though heavenly, still be human, and that in His Father's House the place of honour and happiness after His may be occupied by her who made a home for Him on earth. We who believe in the Communion of Saints have none of those vague ideas, those faint hopes, those painful uncertainties which distress the kind hearts of many outside the Church, who know not what they may think and believe. We know that nothing holy, beautiful, and desirable in our human nature will be destroyed from the minds and hearts of the Blessed: that Jesus Himself is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." His virtues, His affections, His friendships last and endure. It is thus with His Saints who reign with Him. So we have a St. Agnes, coming back from heaven to remonstrate

with her parents, who grieved too much at losing her. The Most She was not indifferent to the distress of those who Pure Heart had been and still were dear to her. The same is in Glory true even to a greater degree of the Queen of all Saints, whom the King delights to honour in His court above. To His faithful servants He entrusts His ten or His five cities—but to her the whole of His kingdom is given, that he may rejoice her Most Pure Heart by granting all she asks for those she loves and protects, that thus He may continue in heaven the practice of earth and show His honour by this sweet subjection.

Mother of God! thy Heart and His Inseparably shine;
The Sacred Heart thou worshippest Is dutiful to thine.

And do we, also, want a Mother up there in heaven? Indeed, we do—one to speak for us in the human ears of Jesus the language of human love and prayer. It is true that Mary reigns over the Angelic choirs, but I think that she must love her own kind, the seed of Abraham, better than them, if only that God took not their nature but hers and ours—and so her eyes of mercy look down where they are so wanted, and her Heart turns to her exiled children.

We want her now, and again we shall greatly want her—to be with us at the hour of our death—and then, through the mercy of God, through the Blood of Jesus, to hold our hand in heaven, when first we gaze with child-like wonder on the God of Beauty.

OUR LADY OF MERCY

In Fest. Septr. 24.

N how many ways Our Blessed Lady shows herself to be the Mother of Mercy! On the authority of St. Philip, we Oratorians claim her for the Foundress of our simple, unpretentious Congregation; and no doubt others have experienced the like favour though they and we say little about such a privilege. It is good to keep hidden royal secrets and favours. With his customary humility St. Philip has refrained from telling when and how he received the Madonna's command to found our Family; and so we rather cherish his statement as a domestic record than make public boast of the favour. But the Order of the Redemption of Captives, like the Carmelite Order, is bound to no such reticence, and is provided with abundant and authentic proof that it owes its origin to the initiative of Our Lady, that Mary and no other is its Foundress. The Feast is kept to commemorate the fact, and in thanksgiving for all the tender love and mercy which moved her to institute and cherish the Order.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, St. Peter Nolasco was chosen by Our Lady to carry out her compassionate designs. Her Order of Mercy was to ransom or redeem Captives—those who were slaves to the Saracens, especially in the parts of Spain which were wrested by the infidels from Christian rulers.



VIRGO CLEMENS, ORA PRO NOBIS



Enslaved to the Saracen, Christian captives endured Our Lady every kind of abject misery and suffering, and were in of Mercy peril of losing the faith and turning renegade because of the cruelties practised upon them. The members of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy were, in cases of necessity, to exchange places with the Christian captive they could not ransom, and become slaves to the Turkish master. This was the romantic idea, the inspired plan of Our Lady. We may consider that she brought it from Calvary, where she had beheld her own Divine Son die instead of others.

How ashamed of ourselves we must feel, how small and insignificant all that we attempt must appear, when compared to what Our Lady expects of the members of her Order of Mercy! Every one of them must be ready to imitate the heroic charity of St. Paulinus, who sold himself into slavery in order to restore an only son to his widowed mother. It seems as though Our Lady would have her own children brought back from slavery by a similar heroic charity.

St. Philip knows that here in London is enough and to spare of such work, only lighter, easier, and proportioned to our weakness. He gives us our Indies here, even as he was given his in Rome. If we desire, we can please Our Lady of Mercy. Around is a vast multitude of brethren who are captives, captives of ignorance, sickness, disgrace, sadness, heresy and sin, and in deeper prisons lie the Captive Holy Souls. It is not even necessary to go forth and seek them: all that is wanted in their behalf is—intercessory prayer before the Divine Captive of the Sacramental Cell.

THE SEVEN DOLOURS

For the Feast, Third Sunday in Septr.

HE Sacred Heart of Jesus was supremely rich in every grace and perfection, and its gracious qualities were manifest. Amongst Our Lord's virtues that which seems to have been most characteristic is compassionate tenderheartedness. Again and again, in the wilderness, at Naim, at Bethany, this compassion was displayed. But in one single instance there was a mysterious exception to this universal gentleness. From the beginning of His signs, from the commencement of the Public Ministry, He seemed unwilling to make manifest the tender love which He could not but have for His own dear Mother. His first living act of human affection was hers, hers also was His last; but during the intervening years He shrank from giving in public even the customary tokens of filial tenderness. In the early years there may often have been untold outpourings of tender love. There may have been: but I venture to think there were not. It would be somewhat contrary to the noble dignity of Christ's life on earth, it would give a look at least of want of consistency, were any great difference of demeanour assumed in the public and private intercourse of God when He "dwelt among us." That there was complete exchange of thought, and most tender reciprocal feeling, we cannot doubt: but it was of the higher and more



POSUIT ME DESOLATAM



perfect interior kind. It is said of the Divine Infant The Seven that mirth never was seen to play upon His beautiful Dolours features. It is also certain that He who came with the title of Man of Sorrows would never appear in other guise. He would go to the marriage feast; He would eat and drink, and accept the invitations given Him; but always He was the same calm, silent, gentle, gracious Holy One, whose Divinity shone through the Flesh He had assumed. And for the Mother whom He so loved He chose out the greatest of life's sorrows, not sparing her, as though He Himself was the Sword of Sorrow with which her Heart was to be pierced.

The explanation does not seem difficult. The best and holiest lot on earth is to be with Jesus and to share His portion, abiding by His choice: and He chose the chalice of suffering and Calvary.

Nothing great is ever done for God except through sacrifice. The greatest work of all is man's Salvation, accomplished only by sacrifice, and that of the Divine Victim: and the Mother of that Victim has a share in the immolation, and has many and great things to do for God till the end of time. Therefore, while He is clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, hers is dyed with the purple of the King—is a regal robe of mourning.

In distributing the gifts which He bestowed when He left the world and returned to His Father, Christ apportioned persecutions, calumnies, violence to the Apostles; to His Mother, who had already gone through her martyrdom, He offered no more Dolours, but only a prolongation of her Desolation so long as she remained in this vale of tears. Acute pain and anguish should no longer be hers when His were ended. She

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said her Fiat each time a Dolour pierced her soul. Seven times she was wounded, and would have submitted to be wounded seventy-seven times, but that in these Seven recorded Strokes all sorrows were contained and conveyed to her soul. After the Precious Blood there was nothing more beautiful and precious than the sweet tears shed for another fifteen years of life without her Jesus. They watered and renewed the face of the earth. Thus it was because God so loved the world that He left His Mother here, to the end she was to "lift up her hands for the life of her little children."

We should often gaze on the Mater Dolorosa, the Pietà, the Queen of Sorrows pierced with the Seven Swords. For we have to remind ourselves that now is the time for weeping, that without gloom and melancholy we should be sorrowful and compassionate for sin and suffering, and the miseries we witness on every side. To shrink from sorrow and distress is our human natural instinct. We say, "Why, let the stricken deer go weep." But "it is better to go to the house of mourning," it is more divine. It is divine to descend from bliss to woe, from joy to being "sorrowful even unto death." Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh (Luke vi). Such is the teaching of our Divine Master: and we all lovingly recognize and confess that in this as in all His most faithful and perfect Disciple was the Queen of Martyrs. God grant that the Wounded Hand which wiped away the tears for ever from thine eyes of mercy, O Mary, may at thy pleading, sweet Mother, wipe away our own!





REGINA SACRATISSIMI ROSARII ORA PRO NOBIS

ROSARY SUNDAY

First Sunday of October.

REATION is full of the wonders of the goodness and power of God. And there is another wonder in creation. It is a marvel that the free wills of angels and men should have chosen to disobey God, and dare to commit sin in the presence of the Creator, setting up malice in preference to goodness, in defiance of almighty power.

The Incarnation transcends Creation, is far more wonderful, reveals deeper mysteries of the Divine Perfections, makes known further possibilities of infinite mercy and love. And here also is an accompanying wonder, a greater marvel, caused by human wickedness. It is that man's free will continues even now to resist the will of God, to do evil in His sight, in spite of the additional rights and claims of God Incarnate.

Now, Creation goes on: souls are being made by God out of nothing, as was the first created soul. And the Incarnation also continues in activity. Its fires of Divine love still glow and burn in the heart of the Divine Immensity. The Three and Thirty years of Our Lord are not the limit of the Mystery. How short a time! compared with the eternal life of Him Who descended from heaven. How few were His opportunities of manifesting Himself, of performing

wonders, of making known His Mother! Therefore, even while departing from earth, He still remained with us. He stayed, as He promised, with the Church, His Bride: and her vitality is imperishable and immortal, because it is a continuation and prolongation of His own life, because He is with her still.

The history of the Church in all her vicissitudes is a repetition of the Human Life of her Lord. She. too, has her periods of joyous innocence, of sadness and suffering, of gladness and triumph. Joy, Sorrow, and Glory enter into her life, each in its season, and in divers ways and degrees influence the spirit and feelings of the Faithful. The very course of the Ecclesiastical Year brings about these successive moods in the mystical life of the Church. Christmas joy. Lent sadness and its Passion-tide, and Easter gladness, are proof that the heart of the Church beats in accord with the Sacred Heart, that she lives, or rather, that Christ lives in her. Take as examples the case of individual Saints, who after all are miniatures of their Mother the Church. Many have had countless favours and visions of the Holy Child, which proves that in their case the soul has been steeped in the Joyful Mysteries. St. Francis, St. Catherine of Siena, and the Eestatics show how the Sorrowful Mysteries mark those who contemplate them. For the influence of the Glorious Mysteries we must not look too exactingly in this vale of tears; yet they also have been the spiritual sunshine of many a soul, and I think our own Saint Philip will let me name him as one who would not have been out of place even on Mount Tabor.

And so the Church in her members has to live the life of Christ. The Holy Ghost works in her mysteries

on which "the Angels desire to look." She has The Rosary imparted to her the virtues of the life of Jesus, and of Our she has to bear the trials; for she is not greater than Blessed Lady her Divine Master. As Christ found enemics from His birth till His death, so His Church must be content to suffer persecution. Her whole system, her essential characteristics, her mission, are sure to provoke opposition and strife; for, in every age vice abounds, in every country and climate human passions are to be found either secretly conspiring or openly rebelling against the restraints of the Gospel. The passions of man and the gates of hell are in alliance; they are fostered and governed by that which Our Lord has named the Prudence of the Flesh; and the Church, faithful to the mission imposed on her by her Founder, spreads everywhere, and everywhere encounters and rebukes this Prudence of the Flesh and the World, teaches the supernatural, and rescues the victims of the world, the flesh and the devil—all who feel weary and heavyladen.

In this life of Christ and His Church, Mary as of old takes her place, and that, as of old, a prominent one. Therefore does the Dragon single out the Woman to make especial war on her and her clients. In this more than anything Satan seems to show his influence over heretics, and how completely he has succeeded in severing and separating them from Christ. *They* slight His Mother: *He*, being with us, makes sure that we pay due honour to her who is absent. For Mary is actually in heaven, while Jesus is actually both in heaven with her and on earth with us. To keep up in our hearts a devotion to His Mother is an obligation which love imposes on His Own Sacred Heart. Thus,

O Church of Christ, are "all thy children taught of God," and establish their claim to be thy children by their Catholic devotion to the Mother of God. She who remained so lowly and unobtrusive for the Thirty-Three years is now openly accorded all this public honour and worship, and is proclaimed OUEEN OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY. Even now and even thus God faithfully fulfils His threat made in the beginning that He would put enmity between the Woman and the Serpent. In times of danger and peril, when the Old Serpent seems triumphant, Mary is at hand-like Esther, to speak to the King for her people—like Judith, to rescue them from the infernal Holofernes. In times when the Church has to undergo her agony and passion, then is Mary our Advocate close by, as she was near the Cross of Jesus.

The battle is unceasing, and the battle-field is wide. We may say that it covers the whole world. But wherever evil attacks, there is Mary ready to defend; wherever evil enters, there Mary follows to drive it forth; wherever evil has conquered, Mary is at hand to rescue the fallen. The fight rages—now in the depths of pauperism, its dangers, its temptations, its degradations—now in the realms of science, its pride, its independence, its revolt—now in the world of wealth, its sloth, its indolence, its sensuality—the conflict is carried on through the entire range of the thoughts and wishes of the human heart.

It is chiefly in the school, in the church, in the confessional, on the death-bed, that victory is won, and then by a very martyrdom of patient weariness, and by the hidden help of the Mystical Rose, ever counted on and never invoked in vain.

In this our time, ever since 1870, the conflict is The Rosary conspicuous, and fought in the highest places. Evil of Our has gained entrance and maintains a footing where Blessed Lady we should least expect to see it. Nay, it has assumed a tone of boastfulness, as though it were completely victorious. I may describe it as the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. In the Eternal City, the Capitol of the Catholic World, men year after vear hold festival and public rejoicings on the 20th of September for an event which Pius IX. stigmatized as "a great sacrilege and an enormous injustice." Since that calamitous day no repentance, no reparation has been heard of; and the intruders continue to dwell without reverence, respect, or pity, in the Interdicted Ouirinal. Our Holy Father Pius X. is the third Sovereign Pontiff who in his Vatican Captivity is "subjected to unworthy restraints," and this in the centre of Christendom, and at the hands of Christians —for his enemies are not Moslems. While enduring his portion of this prolonged persecution, the universally venerated Predecessor of Our Holy Father exclaimed: We appeal to the help of Christians, the Queen of the most Holy Rosary. Filled with sweetest hopes, we lift up heart and hands to Mary of the Rosary—though the recreant world laughs, and mocks with blasphemous and sacrilegious tongue (Leo XIII., 7th December, 1883). Et nunc reges intelligite. Ozias "felt the stroke of the Lord," and was a leper till the day of his death because he heeded not the warning of Azarias: Go out of the sanctuary: do not despise: for this thing shall not be accounted for thy glory by the Lord God (II. Para. xxv.) Even Heliodorus had sense enough, when his king wished to act at Jerusalem as at present kings are

acting at Rome, to write his warning: He that hath his dwelling in the heavens is the visitor and protector of that place, and he striketh and destroyeth them that come to do evil to it (II. Macc. iii).

Where Leo dwelt in prison Pius X. now pines in patient pathetic silence—silence which is as significant as the speech of his Predecessor. Our Lord the Pope imitates Him of Whom he is the Vicar, as though he feared further remonstrance would only increase the obstinacy of his persecutors and so make their sin the greater: If I shall tell you, you will not believe me: and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go (St. Luke xxii. 67, 68). In silentio et spe erit fortitudo vestra (Isai. xxx. 15).

It is in Commemoration of the help of Mary given at the prayer of the Church, a Rosary prayer recited through the Eternal City in procession by St. Pius V. and St. Philip, that this Day was made a Festival of the Church by St. Pius himself, as the Feast of Our Lady of Victory. According to Benedict XIV. (De Festis), St. Pius V. instituted the Feast on the first Sunday of October, because the Seventh of October, 1571, fell on the first Sunday of that month. But later, 1573, Gregory XIII. decreed that the Day should be the Feast of the Rosary of Our Blessed Lady because the victory was won while the Rosary was being said. And finally, Innocent XII. in 1716 raised the Feast to a higher rank, and extended it to the whole Church because of renewed victories over the Turks in Austria and Corfu.

The Rosary is now as ever the weapon with which the Blessed Virgin contends against the enemies of the Church. But, alas! it would seem that the hands now holding it are feeble indeed. When St. The Rosary Peter was kept in prison, prayer was made without of Our ceasing by the whole Church. That prayer prevailed; Blessed Lady but we in our turn have prayed for thirty years and more, and the answer we hope for has not yet been accorded. May it not be because "Christ the Lord is taken in our sins?" May it not be that this punishment is come upon us, in consequence of general decay of piety, and want of fervour in the practice of Christian holiness of life? Let us think it, and confess it to the Refuge of Sinners; and so while we try to return to the fervour and holiness of the early Christians, our prayer, like theirs, will at last obtain this greatly-needed victory of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary.

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THE MATERNITY OF OUR BLESSED LADY

Second Sunday of October.

OD has made man "a little less than the angels," but has crowned him with such glory and honour that he may be well content with a nature which, if less perfect than the angelic, is more favoured.

At first, it would seem as though all the advantage and all the superiority were on the side of the angel. Like his Creator, he is a pure spirit. His faculties are most perfect; what he knows, he knows with the clear certitude of unerring intuition; what he loves, he loves without division, distinction, or reserve. So identified are his faculties with their immaterial substance, in which they are rooted, with which they appear to be nearly, if not altogether, co-extensive so harmoniously do they work, that the very energy and activity of their operations are the rest and quiescence of the spirit. Never have infancy and childhood on the one hand nor has old age on the other delayed or dimmed their full manifestation; they have an imperishable maturity. Such an one is an angel, a bright and glorious emanation and image of his God, a life that is at once light and melody, which in the dawn of creation adores and praises God amid the stars of the firmament, whose shining is less bright, whose music is less sweet! Every angel, moreover, stands alone in his luminous life: neither by origin



SANCTA DEI GENITRIX, ORA PRO NOBIS



nor relationship is it linked to any other, except, The indeed, to the Divine Life of God in Whom each Maternity angel has his being. So different and separate from of Our each other are angels that many theologians consider Blessed Lady each angel constitutes a distinct species in himself. God took not the seed of angels, assumed not angelic nature, but the seed of Abraham, the nature of the human family; and, as regards union with God, the Incarnation has effected nothing for the angels, but it has bestowed on them this long-desired boon—a Head and King in Jesus, in Mary a Queen, and in us fellow servants and subjects.

Much less, rather than "a little less," than the angels does man appear to be. It is humiliation to man's pride to study that strange compound of soul and body, that animated spirit and flesh which constitute human nature. How slowly the mind must work in its reasonings, reflections and deductions! How feebly the will must move in its faltering, hesitating choices! Infancy and old age abridge and terminate man's life, his sojourn here on earth, and often sickness and death untimely cut it short.

And yet, O sons of Adam, O daughters of Eve, rejoice! you have that which the angels have not, that which, if they might, they would envy—the nature which God assumed. You have what God now has, what angels never had—a heart. You have what God has, what angels never had—a MOTHER! Rejoice, and on this Feast of Mary exult exceedingly, for we celebrate to-day that Maternity of hers wherein we have the same Mother as God has—His is ours, ours is His—"the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope."

When we speak of the Maternity of Mary, we mean primarily and directly her relationship to God Himself, to her Son the Word made Flesh, Whose mortal Mother she is in the truest, fullest sense. With this divine Maternity we connect her Maternity of adoption, the Maternity of grace, something less than divine, but far more than human-the Motherhood of Mankind. The first, her maternal relationship to God, is an infinite honour and dignity -infinite, in the sense that there cannot be a greater; it can neither be surpassed nor rivalled; of all Mary's gifts and graces it is immeasurably the chief. It consists in that true natural tie which, in the plainest, most real and actual sense, constitutes Him her Child and her His Miracles accomplish it, graces adorn it, correspondence to those graces makes her worthy of it, but nothing interferes with, nor obscures, its grand and matter of fact simplicity. Her perpetual Virginity does not diminish, but, rather, intensifies its reality, while strengthening the bond. His infinite Majesty, His adorable Divinity does not divest it of a single element of its human, physiological reality. Every woman calls him her son, whom she conceives, and brings forth: and thus precisely, for the same reason, does the Virgin Mary claim as her very own and only Son Him Who was conceived of her by the Holy Ghost at Nazareth and was born of her at Bethlehem.

Jesus Christ, not Adam, is the true Head of the human family, the King of all creation. The first Adam, the earthly image of the heavenly Adam, His predecessor in time, was placed in Paradise to be His Precursor and Representative to the first generations; even as later He, the one true Head of the Church,

when leaving the world placed Peter in that new The Paradise to be to the regenerate His visible Repre-Maternity sentative and Vicar. But, by delaying the Incarnation, of Our by choosing to enter His creation in the "fulness of Blessed Lady time" instead of the beginning, what did Christ gain? He gained for Himself a Mother. Adam was not "made of a woman," Christ was: and perhaps it is precisely because of this that in the first man there seems always a less human look—because mother he had none. Whereas the goodness and the humanity, as St. Paul says, of Christ our Saviour seem all the greater, precisely because He comes not to us alone, but appears with a Mother! Ah, a mother is a being so beautiful, so desirable that from all eternity God chose and determined at whatever cost to have one for Himself. In the plans of divine Predestination He decreed this as the second choice of His Free Will, as that which would give supreme content and consolation to the Word made Flesh. So the Incarnation was delayed till the Immaculate Conception brought a Mother well worth waiting for!

And now let us consider the secondary meaning of the Maternity of Mary. Through the goodness of God our Saviour, she is also our Mother, not in the order of nature but in that of grace. When we reflect that God so loved the world as to give His only Son for the life of the world, it helps us to believe the almost incredible generosity which permits us to participate with Jesus in the maternal love of Mary. What a proof of His tender love of us, of the sincerity of His fraternal affection! He gives, not only His Blood, His life, not only more than His life—Himself in the Holy Eucharist—but even His Mother! Man,

it is true, can die for another; but can ever one be found who could love as Jesus loves? Call to mind the mysterious love between a woman and the fruit of her womb. So sacred is it, that a man is altogether reluctant—I will not say to share his feelings for her with another, but even to allow them to be seen and spoken of; the very allusion to them often seems almost a liberty on the part of his most familiar friend. But here we have our dearest Saviour ready to pour out from His own Sacred Heart its choicest treasures, ready to transfuse into hearts like ours its holiest and most tender affections, bidding us "behold" in His our own sweet Mother! Praised and blessed for evermore be the Creator Who has given me a place in the human family rather than one in the angelic ranks!

But it may be imagined that ours is a mere relationship of nominal value, a title of courtesy, of adoption and affection, fictitious compared with that between Jesus and Mary. Not so. The words of Jesus have divine and creative power. "Ipse dixit, et facta sunt. He spoke, and they were made:" He effected this relationship in the order of grace, which, less than divine, is far more than mere earthly adoption. Nay, if only we could perceive the substance of "the invisible things of God"-more real and intimate than "the bonds of Adam" and the ties of earth—we should see that, even as life surpasses death, and as the heaven of heavens excels this shadowy and fleeting earth, this great, undeserved, unexpected elevation to the standing and privileges of becoming children of Mary surpasses, without wounding or weakening, our relationship to the dear mothers who brought us into this vale of tears. God's Mother is then our Mother, our Life, our Sweetness,

and our Hope, the Mother of fair love and holy hope. The She is our Life, because she brought Jesus our Life to Maternity the world that lay in darkness and the shadow of of Our death. She is the Sweetness of the Saints, the Hope Blessed Lady of Sinners. Life, Sweetness, Hope—three beautiful words! yet all three contained in that one still more beautiful word—Mother: for is not every true mother to each child of hers—its life, sweetness, hope? Holy Mary, Mother of God! Blessed art thou amongst all women, amongst all mothers!

THE PURITY OF OUR BLESSED LADY

Third Sunday of October.

HERE is a flower which is beautiful, fragrant, white as snow: it lifts its fairness fearlessly to the light: it stands erect, and so holds its pure blossoms far from the reach of soil or stain of earth: it is delicate, and injured by the lightest touch. There is a virtue which is beautiful, fragrant, white as angel's raiment: which lifts its face confidingly and fearlessly to the face of the Father in heaven, which holds itself aloof from everything defiling, earthly, sensual, which is of exquisite delicacy, and is wounded by the slightest fault. The flower is the lily, the virtue is Purity: and the flower is the chosen emblem of the virtue. The Church, who gives as her noblest decoration to those who die for the Faith the Crown and the Palm of the Martyr, has no fairer offering for the Virgin for St. Joseph himself-than the Crown and the Lily. The Immaculate Conception is a grace and glory given to one alone, one whom we all love, in whom we all rejoice: it is God's choicest gift, bestowed on the most worthy, and none are disloyal enough to grudge it to Mary. But to the human race is offered a beautiful gift—inferior, of course, and yet in some aspects sufficiently like Mary's to make her children very dear to that Virgin Mother. It is a lily, if only a lily of the valley: it beautifies the face of the earth as the stars do that of heaven, for it



\$ANCTA VIRGO VIRGINUM ORA PRO NOBI\$



grows among the thorns. It is this holy Purity, to be The Purity found in every state—in the youth and maiden, in the of Our married and the widowed, in priest and people. "O Blessed Lady how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!" It is the happiness of the youth, the honour of the maiden, it is the light of life, the glory of the brow, the lustre of the eye, the peace of the features, the innocence of the heart, above all health, and wealth, and nobility, above all crowns, for it is the priceless pearl of the crown of heaven. Its beauty is beheld with awe, and its fragrance reaches the heart, its spotlessness dazzles and fascinates, its loftiness reproves the worthless and the vile

Its possession and presence is known by so many glorious properties. For where is Purity there modesty is found, there gentleness abounds, there bashfulness and reserve intervene, there humility rests. Timidity takes flight at the first warning of peril; chastity veils her calm features because of the angels of God; virginity hastens from the thoroughfare to the seclusion of home; the manly control of the heart restrains the glance of the eye, and maintains the compact as to looks made by upright and ingenuous youth; and womanly delicacy takes alarm at anything in dress, in manners, in appearance calculated to attract attention and provoke remark. Purity dreads compliments, resents flattery; and flees away with the swiftness of the startled deer from the approach of danger. It will hear nothing, see nothing, read nothing, permit nothing about which it has misgivings. It will accept no presents, no bribes to shackle its freedom and so forfeit its peace. Well does it know that the least breath may wither its beauty, the slightest touch may injure

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its snowy whiteness; that the smallest infidelity to the exquisite sensitiveness of grace may imperil the very existence of this flower of our human nature, that the blush on the cheek is often the blood of a murdered soul.

It knows that two out of the Ten Commandments are given in its behalf. It remembers the severity—the awful severity which punishes its enemies. Cities are destroyed by fire from heaven, a Deluge destroys the earth and its inhabitants, multitudes are hewn to pieces with the sword, chastisements perpetually take place for the sake of the safety of this virtue loved by God, but "with the jealousy of God."

More than this. We look on Jesus Christ, and from His conduct towards weeping penitents who bewail their loss at His blessed feet we learn the value He sets on Purity. How infinite, how divine is the compassion He shows for the prostrate misery that pleads with silent tears! What pity He displays! How tenderly and considerately does He, the Judge of the living and the dead, speak of one condemned by her own fellow creatures, pronounced to be hopelessly fallen, for ever lost! Not so to the divine clemency of His Sacred Heart. To cancel the past, restore the actual treasure lost, is, indeed, beyond possibility: but nothing is beyond His mercy: He can give a new purity, and a greater love: He can pardon many sins, "because she hath loved much:" when all accuse, He can refuse to condemn, can say in gentlest encouragement, "Go in peace, and sin no more"—giving grace to the disgraced, strength to the weak, hope to the despairing, to accomplish His merciful behest. surely those tones of pity, that hand of absolution, that look of forgiveness and reconciliation are not wholly The Purity unknown to us! Where would be our confidence and of Our our refuge, did we not feel that the same sweet Saviour Blessed Lady even now intercedes with open Wounds, even now, as of old, pleads with the worst, and offers pardon so perfect that He speaks thus to the sinner: Therefore at least from this time call to Me, Thou art my Father, the Guide of my Virginity? O Precious Blood, that restores the whiteness of snow! O healing Hand! O bending compassionate mercy that lifts the broken reed, the bruised lily, and bids it again be beautiful, and fragrant, and white, though bedewed, perchance, with the tears of a secret sorrow, a sweet contrition, though henceforth hidden more securely and sheltered in the valley of humility!

Should any wonder why the praise and excellence of a virtue in whose behalf God thundered His Commandments, about which our Blessed Lord gave most solemn warnings, most alluring counsels, are not more often preached, it may be remembered that Purity is praised and extolled whenever we preach on Mary. "All good things come to us together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands, for she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God, being commended for the gift of discipline" . . . "For she is a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God." . . . "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, and this also was a point of Wisdom"—a grace, that is, obtained by us through Mary, the Seat of Wisdom!

The very preaching about Mary is in itself a sermon on Purity. For in the Virgin of virgins that

virtue is displayed in all its perfection. Marriage is honourable, but Virginity is venerable, and they who keep it are the fairest children, the most beautiful images of Mary. Few flowers of earth are fitter for God's altar than the lilv, few virtues can be named more pleasing to God than Virginal Purity. It is to "the Virgin named Mary" that the Archangel is sent. It is over the Virginity of Mary that the Holy Ghost, the Divine Dove of Purity hovers. It is the brightness and undimmed lustre of that Virginity which is the Sign to the nations—"Behold a Virgin shall conceive!" It is to honour that Virginity, to assert it against the silence of her modest humility, that the Holy Spirit hastens to the Temple, fills the souls of Simeon and Anna, and through them declares that the Babe she carries in her arms is the Promised Salvation, the Son born of a Virgin, and that she therefore needs not the Purification for which she asks in the device of her humility. It is the pure Virginity of Mary that makes her His "Love, His Dove, His Chosen One." It is also the one grand, distinctive virtue of the Mother of God which now exercises the greatest influence on the children of her adoption as it did before on the Fruit of her womb. The Purity of the Blessed Virgin is the familiar, fragrant perfume which pervades the Church of Christ like incense and fills her children with happiness and peace which is not of this world. I state facts. God gives His graces in various ways, but the grace of Purity He gives principally and chiefly to those who are the children of the "Mother of fair love." As in a home the young men feel the happy, holy influence of pure and gentle sisters, so in the Church ten thousand times more do we experience

the magic, the charm, the persuasiveness of the Blessed The Purity Virgin. The statistics of Ireland, and other countries, of Our show that this is so: the contrast between the Catholic Blessed Lady population and the other is most marked. No attempt can be made to conceal the fact, though non-catholics are unwilling to accept the explanation. May that which is true of a nation remain ever true of all who hold—as Ireland holds—The Catholic Faith! "Hear me, ye divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense. Send forth flowers as the lily, and bring forth leaves in grace!" (Eccus. 50).

PATRONAGE OF OUR BLESSED LADY

Fourth Sunday in October.

THE Fathers of the Church have written of three stupendous miracles by which God has shown His power. The first is the union of God and Man in the Incarnation: the second is the union of Virginity and Maternity in the Blessed Virgin Mary; the third is the union of the human heart and Faith. What shall we say of that one Blessed amongst women in whose most Pure Heart all these three miracles were worked? For so it was. "Blessed art thou who hast believed." A true statement, confirmed later by Jesus Himself, when He said: Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. For Faith in the word of God, in the message His angel brought from heaven, made it possible that the two other miracles should be wrought—that Mary should be the Virgin-Mother, and her Son the God-Man.

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me" Mary exclaimed, while confessing these wonders worked in and through her Heart. But we may well occupy ourselves with the thought of the greater things done by God in heaven to honour His dear Mother in the sight of saints and angels: we may picture to ourselves the joy, the brightness of that most Pure Heart of Mary, the more fittingly because it is our privilege to be told by St. Philip to be "Devotees of



ORA PRO POPULO, INTERVENI PRO CLERO



Mary" in this Church of ours where we, his children, The worship God under the invocation of our Blessed Patronage Lady's most Pure Heart.

of Our

And firstly, we must think of the great God Blessed Lady Himself, and try with due fear and reverence to gaze upon His divine life in its activity rather than its repose, although in truth the divine activity and repose are identically the same in the simplicity and perfection of the Divine Nature. So that Divine Power, Immensity, Eternity constitute the very essence of that irresistible Ocean of Blissful Life, waveless indeed but not without its infinite throb in which is no succession, which is and must be without beginning and without end. This also do we know—that the energy, the rapidity, the activity of that Divine Vitality, although it cannot but be supremely self-sufficing, is yet so over-abundant and over-flowing that it has chosen to descend into nothingness in order to select from the possibilities there invoking Divine Omnipotence a creation that may have participation in its joy and gladness, that may offer its humble yet acceptable addition to its glory. Thus at its appointed time, at the call of its Creator, its Heavenly Father, made and modelled by His unfelt hand, each creature has come forth from nothing to enjoy a being and existence which is the free gift of Divine Will and Love.

And when this creative act of God is happily accomplished, does the Almighty rest, as we understand rest, and cease to lavish His care, notice and regard for the work of His hands? Does the Father withdraw into that inner Divine life, and absorb Himself in gazing upon the splendour and the image of His substance mirrored in the Son? Is the Son wholly

that she receives from God "the half of His kingdom," the administration of Divine Mercy. For this did God dispose the Heart of Mary, and endow it with such faith: for this did He still further prepare and dispose it upon Calvary, where He spoke with creative word and said "Behold thy son," and gave the maternal instinct so fully that the "multitude of His tender mercies" seems barely enough when Mary pleads for the multitude of the "children of her Desolation." "Many are the children of the Desolate!" exclaimed the Prophet, when in vision he beheld us invoking the Patronage of the Mother of Mercy.

And we in the England of to-day are in an especial way the children of Mary's Desolation, who have an especial claim therefore to her Patronage. For we dwell in Our Lady's Dowry, and it is hard to linger here and witness the devastation of her possessions. God has given to her not only the South and the East, but these green valleys and watered plains of the North, whose inhabitants of old were changed from Angles into Angels, and are now become in multitudes like shepherdless sheep, astray and lost. Let us, however, take courage and fly to the Patronage of her who has renounced none of her royal rights to Merry England; let us pray that once more the great miracle may be renewed—the union of the human heart and Faith!

Faith of our Fathers! Mary's prayers Shall win our country back to thee.



NONDUM ERANT ABYSSI, ET EGO JAM CONCEPTA ERAM

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In Fest. Dec. 8.

HE works of God glorify Him by setting forth as in a mirror the image of His Perfections. Thus we gain our earliest thoughts concerning the Divine Attributes. And when reason falters, revelation takes her by the hand, and leads on to fuller knowledge. We are made acquainted in this way with that great and adorable Perfection of Godthe Divine Immutability or Unchangeableness. Reason assures us, and revelation repeats the truth, that God is "ever the same." "I am the Lord, and I change not" (Mal. iii). "In whom there is no change nor any shadow of alteration" (S. James). How glorious is this permanence of Being, equally without beginning or end, youth or age, eternal Unity, eternal Trinity, infinite knowledge to which no addition is possible, infinite love to which no increase can be made, eternal counsels in which there is no hesitation and no succession! God is not like us. "I am the Lord, and I change not." He is not one who now acts and now reposes—He is incessant activity and uninterrupted repose at once. He is not one whose nature is separate from its operations and actions—His essence and existence, His thought and will are identically one, are perpetually the same, in one immense, simple, unchangeable, eternal Present. No storm can ever cross the surface of that boundless Ocean, no cloud can obscure that Heaven

of calm splendour, no check can arrest the victorious perpetuity of that untiring activity.

The Angels of God show forth certain of the Divine Perfections: it is part of their happiness to see and feel that they possess this likeness. And among those angelic choirs, the tranquil, pacific, steadfast Thrones may well be thought to represent in their imperturbable serenity the Immutability of their Creator. But looking earthward, looking at man, whom God has made "little less than the Angels," can we see anything to show forth this same Divine Perfection? True it is that in man we trace the glorious image and likeness of the Uncreated Trinity; yet, since the Fall, how faint is that resemblance, how faded that likeness, how disfigured that image! What words of Scripture go home to us more than those of Job, the sorely tried? And how does Job describe man? "Man, born of woman, is full of many miseries, and "-as if this were the greatest misery—"never continueth in the same state." Changeful, inconstant, fickle, inconsiderate, forgetful of the lessons of the Past, foolish in dreams about the Future, letting both Past and Future make us neglect the all-important Present—such are we, such is this human nature of ours as it is accustomed to manifest itself. "What went ye out into the desert to see?" What might have been found? What in most cases would have been found? "A reed shaken by the wind." But the man they went out to find was not as others; and this was the first of the praises our Lord gave His Baptist. Whereas man is described by Job as instability itself. He is a very "leaf," whirled and tossed by every breath of air, "never remaining in the same place." How uncertain are his moods, how

poor his power of perseverance! At one time he is The high in contemplation, at another the same being is Immaculate dragged towards evil by his inclinations. "Miserable Conception man that I am," he cries out, "who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Truly, it would seem that human nature is never free from this leaf-like feebleness. Nay, it is inseparable from the holiest among men. "Behold, among His Saints none is unchangeable" (Job xv. 15).

One, and one only, the Immaculate, in this very grace and singular Prerogative which we celebrate so joyfully, does appear to show forth triumphantly that glorious Attribute, Divine Immutability. In Mary there is no change; she comes forth from the mouth of the Most High; and that which she was in the eternal mind of God she continues to be. Her whole mortal life is simply the faithful, perfect onflowing of her existence in the divine decrees: there is not a check, a flaw, an imperfection or defect from first to last. In her union with God there is no break; in her love of God there is no slackening: it grows, but otherwise it undergoes no sort of change; it is constant, intimate, active, sustained. At Nazareth, Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Jerusalem, on Calvary she is ever the same constant, faithful Mother, the Mother who, steadfast and unfaltering, stood beneath the Cross. Sin never comes "nigh her dwelling." There is no stain of sin that Baptismal waters may efface, no slightest fault or imperfection on which an Absolution can be pronounced. There is no change in Mary. Death, it is true, touches her, holds her: but, like her Divine Son, she remains unharmed for three brief days; and then, as a Dove, she takes wing and soars on high.

calm in the dizzy heights through which she wings her way to the exact place in heaven which God has prepared for her from the beginning. Her Assumption seems like the Ascension of her Jesus, merely a going back, a return home after the briefest absence.

We find, then, in the Immaculate Mother of God a most beautiful showing-forth of Divine Immutability. But let no one think that she will not understand, feel for sympathise with the weak, the wavering, the sick and dving—those innumerable victims of change who lie helplessly everywhere on this sin-stricken world. And I venture to think that Mary pities more than others them that are sick in this country which once was her Dowry-who have inherited, as another Original Sin, a changed religion, one that is changed from the old to the new, from the true to the false—a mutilated religion in which no place has been reserved for Mary, a religion in which she will not and cannot have any portion; for it is "in an honourable people that she has taken root," and there she abides unchanged. Ah, the great Bossuet long ago pointed out the inconsistencies, the contradictions of the various sects of Protestantism—now even much more multiplied than in his day—and from this one feature, their Variations, their Changes, he deduced the wrong, the wickedness of the so-called Reformation. We also see around us, outside the Church, terrible confusion, disorder, want of logic, want of reason, want of everything sensible, solid, stable. False teachers assert all manner of errors, contradicting one another, and, often enough, contradicting themselves! What use to England are these "empty clouds?" Why should men trust these "rudderless ships?" What fruit can be expected from these "withered, uprooted trees?"

Full of compassion for them, in humble gratitude we The turn to Mary Immaculate, Queen of Perseverance, that Immaculate by her intercession, through the gentle influence of her Conception blest fidelity, our friends may be converted, our enemies become our brethren, and that our own souls may be securely established in unfaltering, unchanging obedience, faith, and love.

ST. JOHN OUR LADY'S CHAPLAIN

In Fest. Dec. 27.

Et ex illa hora accepit eam discipulus in sua.

And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.

John xix. 27.

() the devout reader how startling must appear those words: The disciple took her to his own! What had he, what kind of home, what amount of shelter to which he could take the Mother of His Divine Master? Had not this son of Zebedee left all things to follow Jesus? Poor from his birth, lowly in his lot, how little must have been that which he could call his own! The very nets left by this fisherman of Galilee were no longer new, he was mending them with his father when he and James, his brother, were called and followed It could not be to earthly possessions, to comfort, that Our Lady was taken. To a dwelling and shelter it doubtless was—but she went to a poverty at which most of us would shudder, to a life of hardship like that of former days, when even food depended on a precarious fishing in waters where they might labour all night and catch nothing.

But what else can we think that Mary would accept? It was in a stable that her Jesus was born, on a gibbet that He died. Between that birth and



DEINDE DICIT DISCIPULO: ECCE MATER TUA.

ET EX ILLA HORA ACCEPIT EAM DISCIPULUS IN SUA



that death she shared with Him so many trials and St. John hardships-for: He was poor, and in labours from Our Lady's His youth. Ye rich, remember this amid your wealth, Chaplain and enjoyments, pleasures and luxuries, on all of which Jesus has pronounced warning and woe! And O ve poor, remember this amid your struggling life and cheerless lodgings, your scanty fare, and thin attireon all of which Jesus has pronounced His blessing! It is impossible to think that the Mother could have left her Crucified Child in the tomb, and entered any kind of palace or stately dwelling. When kings did kneel and adore, and offer gifts, her Son's throne was a manger, and we feel sure that if she kept the frankincense and myrrh, the tributary gold she gave away. Her kingdom is not of this world. Though she dwells in "the inheritance of the Lord," her kingdom on earth is like the Church of Jesus, universal but spiritual. She shares the House of God, because she is the Mother of God.

Besides this decent and evangelical poverty, to what of his own did the Disciple of Jesus take the Mother? He dedicated to her, and consecrated to her service those spiritual gifts and powers which he had received. He who was—St. Jerome says—more tenderly beloved because he was unmarried, he, the virgin Disciple, was entrusted like another St. Joseph with the charge of the Virgin Mother. Oh, the pure and the innocent are dear to Jesus! These are the children of men with whom He delights to be; He loves them, He caresses them, be they little children or beloved disciples, He will draw them to His Sacred Heart, rest their heads on His bosom, because: Of such is the kingdom of heaven. And therefore, because holy and childlike

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innocence and virginity were his, the Disciple whom Jesus loved from that hour took the Mother of Jesus to his own

What else had John? Still no earthly treasure, but far, far higher riches. He had the Holy Ghost. He was one of those on whom Jesus breathed, whom Jesus ordained, to whom He said: Accipite Spiritum Sanctum. He was with Peter when, entering the Temple by the gate called Beautiful, that Apostle said: Look on us. Silver and gold I have not, but what I have I give. Arise and walk. St. Ambrose writes that the Mother of the Lord would not have gone except to one who was in grace. She who was full of grace, who was the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, would not have made her home any but one that was also His. To the Beloved Disciple, then, the Holy Ghost was imparted abundantly. The permanent presence of that Holy Spirit by abiding indwelling qualified St. John to be the chosen child, the companion, the priest and chaplain of Our Lady.

Had he more? Yes, he was a blessed keeper and holder of the Word. The spirit of Jesus possessed him, Philpin the love of Jesus transformed him—he was another Jesus. All marvel when they hear the lofty and divine words with which this sublime Evangelist gloriously and triumphantly intones his Gospel. But his First Epistle is as wonderful, and pathetic enough to make us weep: That which we have heard, and seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—the Word of Life. It is as if he had heard the Gospel sung in heaven—while the Epistle seems to reveal that he has been a favoured listener to the long-silent Mother, hearing from her of the

joy and sweetness of seeing and hearing and handling St. John the Babe of Bethlehem—he on his part able to add Our Lady's his own peculiar privilege and honour of having Chaplain pillowed his poor head on the breast of Jesus, his own priestly power of handling with his hands the same Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Such is the First Client of Mary, our heavenly Queen and Patron. Rupert says of the words spoken to him by our Lord, "Behold thy Mother": De alio quolibet discipulorum si praesens adesset dici potuisset—Pulchrius tamen huic. They might have been said to any other one of the Disciples had he been present, but more beautifully to this one. Let us consider them addressed to ourselves, and learn that we should strive to imitate the Beloved Disciple, if we would be worthy clients of the Queen of heaven. Happy and innocent are the lives protected by Our Blessed Lady!

SOLI DEO GLORIA

OTHER WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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